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CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMS FINANCED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN ROMANIA

A STUDY OF BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED



NOVEMBER 2007

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DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACOR	Association of Communes and Small Towns
ADF	American Development Foundation
ANAMOB	National Association of Millers and Bakers
APADOR-CH	Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania,-Helsinki Committee
APEV	Association of Wine Exporters and Producers of Romania
ARAS	Romanian Association Against AIDS
ARC	Romanian Association of Meat Processors
CEDPA	Center for Development and Population Activities
CENTRAS	Center for Assistance to NonGovernmental Associations
CeRe	Resource Center for Public Participation
CIPE	Center for International Private Enterprise
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DemNet	Democracy Network Project
EU	European Union
GOR	Government of Romania
GRADO	The Romanian Group for the Defense of Human Rights
GRASP	Governance Reforms and Sustainable Partnerships Program
JSI	John Snow Research International
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ILDG	Improved Local Democratic Governance Program
IPP	Institute for Public Policy
IRI	International Republican Institute
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NGO	NonGovernmental Organization
NSF	National Salvation Front
OPAL	Opening Politics by Acting Locally Program
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together
PDA	Pro-Democracy Association
PSI	Population Services International
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RASP	Romanian American Sustainable Partnerships Program
RCSS	Romanian Civil Society Strengthening Program
RFHI	Romanian Family Health Initiative Project
SCI	Support Centers International
SECS	Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality
SEED	Support for East European Democracy Program
SME	Small and medium enterprises
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government
WID	Women in Development
WL	World Learning

Note: “PVO” is used to indicate an international NGO. The use of “CSO” in the text refers to Romanian civil society organizations, including NGOs and associations. “Implementer” refers to non-profit and for-profit organizations that received USAID contracts and/or grants to implement USAID-funded programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID has been a committed supporter of civil society development in Romania since the fall of communism. Since that time both Romania and the civil society sector have undergone major transitions. Almost nonexistent in 1990, civil society has had an extraordinary rebirth and is active in every sector. Romania has rebuilt its economy, established a democratic form of government and improved the quality of life for its citizens through an extensive process of reform. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and their activities have made an indelible impact on this process, culminating in 2007 with Romania's accession to the European Union (EU).

USG assistance has made a substantive difference in the development of Romanian civil society. Although many donors have contributed to Romania's development with financial and technical support, USAID's programs have contributed especially significantly to the development of a set of democratic values and models that have helped foster a democratic culture among activists and have created model organizations in every sector. It also has helped create a cadre of sophisticated CSO leaders and able CSOs that are setting the standards in their areas of expertise.

Romania's accession to the EU is making CSOs undertake another transition: from financial dependency on international donor projects to long-term domestic viability. This is a critical juncture for many CSOs as they look for new partners and means of sustainability. Most of USAID's long-time civil society partners are strong enough to weather the change, but it will be a difficult transition for many others, especially in the civic sector.

BACKGROUND

USAID has provided support to the development of civil society in Romania since 1990. Programs have directly targeted civil society development and have built CSO capacity. Sector-focused development programs have promoted democratic, social (health and child welfare), and economic reforms.

USAID commissioned Democracy International to conduct this Assessment to document the best practices and lessons learned from USG-funded programs in Romania. It is a macro-level look at the factors leading to program successes and setbacks and the impact of USG assistance to the evolution of civil society organizations. The purpose is to share the lessons learned and best practices with other USAID missions as well as with the CSOs and agencies still working in Romania.

Democracy International arranged for an independent team of experts on Romanian civil society and international development to undertake the Assessment in September-October 2007. The team examined civil society involvement in all three sectors and held interviews in Bucharest, Cluj, Dej, Iasi, Timisoara, Bocsia and Vaslui. Sector-specific focus groups were held in Bucharest, Cluj and Vaslui. Questionnaires were also sent to additional CSOs to ensure the Team received input from across Romania.

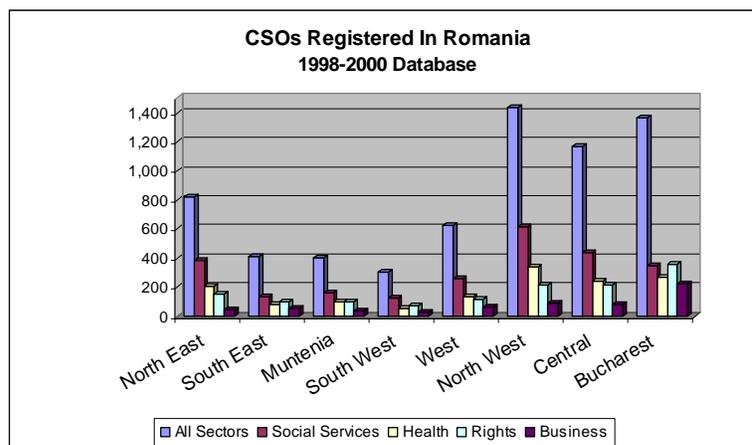
FINDINGS

Civil society in Romania has benefited from a broad range of foreign donors over the period. Although it is sometimes difficult to identify independent effects from a single donor, the Assessment found that **USAID assistance has made a substantial contribution to the development of civil society in Romania.** USAID assistance programs not only provided the funding and expertise that facilitated the development of CSOs, but they contributed to the development of a set of values and approaches that sowed the seeds for improved services, democratic change, and needed reform. Through the provision of direct assistance to build civil society and through the use of CSOs to develop the civic, social service delivery and professional sectors, USAID assistance built model organizations and trained a cadre of sophisticated civil society leaders. USAID's firm support for the reform process and for the advocacy work undertaken by CSOs provided the

USG Civil Society Programs in Romania Best Practices and Lessons Learned

moral and technical support that enabled CSO work and opened doors. USAID and its implementers have been seen as mentors and partners by the recipients, who are now concerned about their future.

USAID's assistance was flexible and responsive to its core CSO partners. It also evolved as CSOs matured and as Romania moved closer to graduation from USG funding. The Assessment found that USAID's strategy to assist CSOs was largely consistent throughout the period, bringing a level of predictability in support that aided in CSO development. Its only strategy switch (in the late 1990s to a government-centric focus) adversely affected the CSO sector, and USAID moved quickly back to a more inclusive "partnership" approach that proved successful and served the model for the future.



(Source: Data from Civil Society Development Foundation Database)

There was enough advance notice of the closure of the USAID program in Romania that USAID was able to plan strategically and include CSO sustainability issues into its on-going CSO programs, such as ChildNet, and to implement the two-year Romanian Civil Society Strengthening Program. A key element in sustainability was improving government-CSO relations. USAID and EU conditioning of their funding on the formation of partnerships required reluctant CSOs and public sector authorities to start working together. Some effective partnerships and sustainable programs have resulted, although these relationships vary considerably in quality and are not yet fully institutionalized.

SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR

CSOs supported by USAID are active as social service providers in the health and child welfare sectors and effectively advocate for the rights and better services for their beneficiaries. Their pilot projects and activities have set the standards for health and child welfare services and have reformed the sectors. CSO services are often able to respond more quickly than public sector services because of their human resources, preparation, flexibility and (project) funding. But this is changing with the departure of USAID and other donor programs. The public sector is increasingly regulating CSO services and is absorbing and/or funding an increasing number of CSO services. This is changing the social service delivery sector. In general, CSO service providers are better positioned to take advantage of alternative funding sources than CSOs in other sectors, such as the civic sector, but some may have to adapt their mission to fit the new funding realities.

Among the **best practices** from USAID's assistance are:

- developing a shared dedication and vision among partners in areas such as child protection; and
- including advocacy training so CSOs are better prepared to deal with the policy and governance issues that affect their ability to develop and deliver effective services.

Among the lessons learned are:

- the need to avoid the creation of donor dependencies; and
- the value of building networks to extend donor reach and CSO voice.

THE CIVIC SECTOR

USAID's impact is highly visible in the civic sector, with some strong organizations benefiting from extensive USAID support through the years. As a result, the organizational capacity and culture of civic organizations tend to be well developed. Civic organizations are especially well developed in the capital and other major cities and have potential to develop further in other parts of the country. Their activities cover all major democracy/governance areas. Their efforts have improved the quality of governance and they have begun to find acceptance of their role as watchdogs among public officials. Perhaps paradoxically, with the departure of USAID, organizations in the civic sector also are more vulnerable than other types of CSOs. As watchdogs and public policy organizations, they guard their independence from government or commercial influence. Alternative funding sources such as USAID made this stance possible. Civic CSOs are beginning to explore different sustainability models but the level of uncertainty is palpable.

Among the **best practices** of USAID assistance are:

- the use of direct support to help create civic organizations followed by sustained support for training and programs that sped the development of the sector and established a sound model for other organizations; and
- a sustained emphasis on the development of advocacy skills that fostered cross-sector coalitions and resulted in successful campaigns to change legislation.

Among the **lessons learned** are:

- the difficulties of ensuring the long-term sustainability for these organizations since their creation was not based on widespread public demand; and
- the need to approach advocacy as a process and not a grant.

THE PROFESSIONAL SECTOR

Associational life among Romanian businesses is strong but imbalanced in some areas. In the economic sub-sectors supported by USAID programs, such as agribusiness and tourism, associations are well established and provide members with good services, while businesses are not organized in other areas of these sub-sectors. USAID's strategy of linking association building to programs offering business and sector-specific expertise worked well and yielded some strong associations. Moreover, some modest USAID program investments, such as study tours and workshops, contributed to the evolution of associations. U.S. models for associations are replicated successfully in the food and tourism sectors, for example, and in some chambers of commerce.

Among the **best practices** from USAID assistance:

- including advocacy components in assistance to associations to give members a voice; and
- encouraging clear and concrete incentives as reasons to join associations.

Among the **lessons learned** are:

- the value of extended contact with the same international experts over time; and
- the need to establish associations that will represent members' interests in all parts of the country, even in less prosperous regions.

CONCLUSIONS

USAID's 17 years of support to the development of civil society in Romania have accomplished a great deal. The Agency has met its overall goal to enhance civil society to: 1) build democratic attitudes and institutions by guiding public policy and encouraging government accountability; 2) support economic freedom and growth; and 3) improve the quality of life of the Romanian people.¹ With the closure of its Romanian mission, USAID is leaving a recognizable and much-appreciated CSO **legacy** that includes:

- A community of CSO leaders and members who have internalized the importance and role of public service;
- Links between CSOs and communities for services and advocacy and mechanisms to hold officials accountable;
- Model organizations in every sector for others to emulate, with a cadre of well-trained and sophisticated CSO leaders that are spreading throughout civil society;
- Positive cross-sector relationships where CSOs can find common ground on issues and strengthen their effectiveness and image;
- Positive CSO-government relationships that facilitate civil society input into policies, further their images and provide some with an avenue of sustainability; and
- Seeds for sustainability within CSOs and the potential for them to diversify their funding mechanisms.

USAID assistance to Romania was unique in that it was provided within the context of a long-term, ambitious regional program. The SEED program provided relatively high levels of sustained assistance to Eastern European countries over an almost 20-year period to support their political, social and economic transitions. These countries, including Romania, started at a relatively higher level of development than some other areas assisted by USAID. This raises some bigger-picture issues about CSO development assistance, such as how much assistance is enough and when is the optimal point for a donor to withdraw. Although such questions are beyond the scope of a country-specific assessment to answer, they warrant further study.

As USAID leaves Romania, civil society still faces significant challenges, most directly related to questions of financial sustainability in the new EU-member funding environment. Many CSOs may find it difficult to maintain their original vision while pursuing alternative sources of support. Although the near term may be difficult, the core CSOs are dedicated and resilient, and we anticipate that they will readily adapt and continue to serve the interests of their constituents and beneficiaries into the foreseeable future.

¹ American Embassy Bucharest, *United States Seed Act, Assistance Strategy for Romania, 1993-1995*. p 3

I. INTRODUCTION

After 17 years of assistance to Romania, USAID will close its operations in the country in 2008. As part of USAID's efforts to document its legacy, USAID/Romania commissioned Democracy International to undertake this study of best practices and lessons learned of USG-funded programs that benefited Romanian civil society organizations in the service delivery, civic and professional sectors. The purpose of the study was to examine the status of each sub-sector before and after USG assistance, highlight the impact of program interventions, and identify the programs' best practices and lessons learned. This Assessment is expected to inform other USAID Missions, donors and the Government of Romania (GOR) on useful approaches to CSO assistance.

Democracy International arranged for an independent team of experts on Romanian civil society and international development to undertake the Assessment in September-October 2007. The team examined USAID programs and civil society involvement in all three sectors. It met with USAID and its implementing partners, other donors, CSOs, government officials and program beneficiaries. Interviews were conducted in Bucharest, Cluj, Dej, Iasi, Timisoara, Bocsă and Vaslui, and sector-specific focus groups were held in Bucharest, Cluj, Dej and Vaslui (Appendix C). Questionnaires were sent to additional CSOs across Romania to ensure the Team received broad input (Attachment 1). The team also undertook a comprehensive review of available documentation (Appendix D). The methodology for the Assessment is detailed in Appendix B.

2. DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND USAID'S RESPONSE

2.1. Romania at the start of USG assistance

USG assistance to Romania began in 1990 shortly after the revolution that brought an end to Nicolae Ceausescu's repressive communist regime. After 45 years of Communist Party rule, Romania faced many challenges. The country found itself in the midst of a humanitarian crisis and failing economy. The brutal and idiosyncratic Ceausescu regime tightly controlled all forms of association and no process of liberalization took place during the 1980s, comparable to other countries in the region. Romanians grew to distrust the government and regime policies created suspicion and mistrust among citizens.

Political leadership in 1990 was weak and uncertain. Opposition parties had been prohibited throughout the communist period. Ceausescu regularly purged the Communist Party in favor of his circle of loyalists, whose position depended on his good graces rather than the formal organizational structure of the party. State institutions had little capacity to address the basic needs of the population and at best remained indifferent. As reformers in other communist states emerged, Ceausescu became more autocratic, taking a hard line against any form of political opening.

The nature of the Romanian revolution posed an additional challenge to civil society development. The revolution brought a swift end to Ceausescu but was not a conclusive victory for democratic forces.

While uncertainty about the future persisted, Romania began a transformation towards a market economy and a more open society. The initial years were difficult. In the last decade of communist rule, the regime sought economic autonomy and payment of its external debt mainly by limiting imports of Western technology and goods. Romania's obsolete technology and state-run economy left it unprepared to compete when the regime changed. Its reluctance to adopt a market economy and the failure of central planning extended the transition and made the country unattractive to many foreign investors. The dissolution of the trade agreements in the former socialist block, the main market for the Romanian products, aggravated the country's economic decline. By 1992, inflation was at 200 percent and the economy dropped 35 percent in real output—a much higher rate than in neighboring countries—bringing Romanian standards of living to new lows. Among other things, Ceausescu-era social-welfare systems and the costs of maintaining over 100,000 abandoned and disabled children in institutions devastated the health care system.

2.2. Civil society development context

With the possible exception of Albania, no other communist state in Eastern Europe had so thoroughly decimated associational life more than Romania. Throughout the communist period, the regime brutally eliminated all forms of independent associations, resulting in an atomized population. People feared the secret police, which meted out harsh punishment for minor infractions, and its extensive network of informants. Communications between Romanian citizens and foreigners, for example, was strictly monitored.

The absence of organized civil society posed an immediate challenge to foreign humanitarian assistance, which began in the days following the execution of Ceausescu. During the Assessment interviews, one long-time CSO leader spoke of European relief trucks arriving in Cluj and finding no one willing or capable of setting up a system of distribution. A student organization eventually fulfilled the role, but this was done in an ad hoc fashion.

Establishing new organizations was difficult. Citizens were reluctant to expose themselves to retribution should an authoritarian regime reemerge. The ambiguous legal status of independent associations compounded the difficulties. Since the communist system had not permitted any associational activity outside state control, no legal provisions existed. Romanians interested in establishing new associations in 1990 relied

on an antiquated law from 1924 to gain legal status. *Law 21/1924 for Legal Persons (Associations and Foundations)* provided legal status but was ambiguous regarding the legal activities of such associations, criteria for membership, and taxation provisions. A new law governing associations was not passed until 2000 after pressure from a broad coalition of CSOs, funded partly through USAID programs.²

Many state officials viewed CSOs as part of the opposition groups that were organizing against them. Thus, foreign assistance targeting civil society was met with suspicion from the state. The needs pressing Romanian society at the time were greater than the suspicions of the political leadership, however, and humanitarian assistance poured into the country largely unencumbered by the Romanian government.

If state officials were suspicious of civil society, many Romanians were simply confused by the concept. Few people understood the place of civil society in a democratic regime. As in other post-communist countries, individuals might agree on what they rejected but found little common ground regarding change. The lack of a unified vision of change interacted with the former regime's inducement of distrust among citizens limiting the potential of civil society development. Finally, few Romanians possessed the management skills necessary to run effective organizations.

Nevertheless, some Romanians actively pursued the establishment of CSOs. One month after the revolution, for example, an interdisciplinary mix of intellectuals and some former state officials formed the Group for Social Dialogue. Its primary purpose in these early days was to stimulate dialogue among Romanians regarding the transition and the purpose of civil society in a democratic regime. Thus, despite the many challenges facing donor assistance to civil society development, a core group of Romanians emerged who openly attempted to organize and who were receptive to foreign assistance to further their aims.

2.3. USAID's response

USG assistance started in 1990 with the direct provision of social services, humanitarian aid and assistance in democratic strengthening. As conditions evolved, assistance expanded to support economic restructuring and the development of democratic institutions. Assistance in Romania was part of the USG's regional Program of Support for East European Democracy (SEED Program). Initially conceived as short-term assistance to support transitions in Eastern European countries, SEED was extended as the complexities of the transition became evident. SEED assistance in Romania will end in 2008.

Throughout the years, USG assistance to Romania consistently targeted support to 1) develop democratic attitudes and institutions; 2) create market policies and processes leading to economic freedom and growth; and 3) improve the quality of life of the Romanian people. In the early years about 55 percent of USG assistance went towards economic restructuring, 30 percent to improve the quality of life and 15 percent was applied to democratization.³ USG CSO development assistance started after the 1992 elections. It was seen as a key US goal and a means to build democratic attitudes and institutions and achieve needed social, economic and political reforms, especially when the newly elected government proved to lack the political will for reforms.

² Government Ordinance 26/2000, which was further modified by the Law on Associations and Foundations 246/2005. Among the benefits for CSOs were a clearer and easier registration process, authorization for associations and foundations to perform income generation activities, and a requirement for local authorities to provide information of public interest to NGOs. Ordinance No. 26/2000 authorizes "public interest organizations," which are CSOs that work for the public benefit and not only for the interest of their members and constituencies. In order to receive "public interest organization" status and to be able to receive funding for services from local and national government, these organizations need to demonstrate a record of three years of uninterrupted activity according to their missions and achievement of their objectives.

³ American Embassy Bucharest, *United States SEED Act Assistance Strategy for Romania, 1993-1995*, p 4

USG Civil Society Programs in Romania Best Practices and Lessons Learned

When the elections in 1996 brought a reform-minded government into power, and with the end of the SEED program thought to be in sight, USAID/Romania's country strategy shifted from a "retail" strategy of directly assisting a wide variety of partners, mostly in the private and CSO sectors ("where there was a particularly effective individual leader or administrator at its head") to a "wholesale" strategy designed to take assistance to a higher level by supporting the government (ministries, parliament and decentralization).⁴ As other donors were providing CSOs with subgrants, USAID decided to cut back on some of its CSO grant-making programs.

USAID/Romania soon returned to a more inclusive strategy regarding CSO participation and focused its strategic plan for 2002-2006 on the development of partnerships. These partnership programs included the provision of subgrants to CSOs and associations to promote reform and to transition some CSO services to government auspices. Most of these programs required CSO and government to form partnerships and for CSOs to increase their CSO networking.

Once Romania completed its steps towards EU accession (which happened in 2007), it would "graduate" from SEED assistance. USAID/Romania's phase out plan (2005-2008) focused on ensuring its investment in the CSO sector would remain after its departure. Sustainability components were incorporated and/or strengthened in ongoing sector-specific programs, and USAID implemented a final program specifically to build the CSOs capacity to weather the end of USAID and other donor funding. A significant focus was on developing networks and organizationally strong CSOs so they could continue to ensure service delivery, advocate for policy reform, and protect the interests of their members into the future.

⁴ USAID/Romania, *USAID Strategy Plan for Cooperation in Romania*, p. 31.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

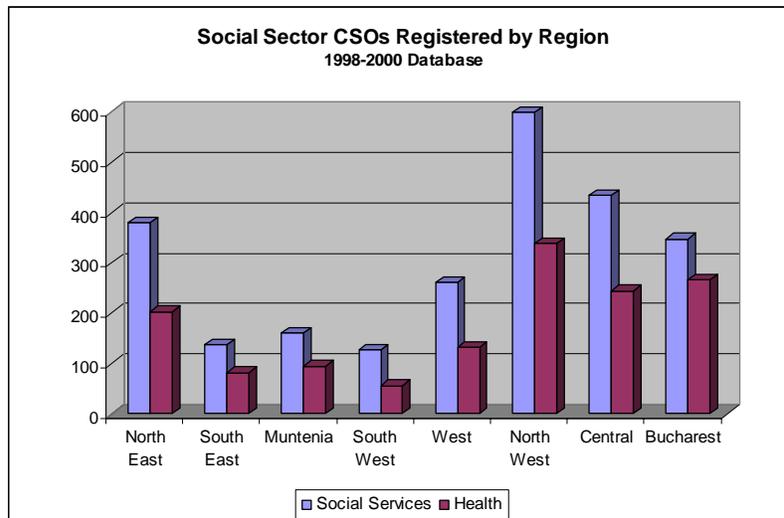
Over the past 17 years, civil society organizations have benefited from a large number of donors and donor-funded programs, including those from the USG. USG-funded programs were provided through a variety of channels, including USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Department of Agriculture, the State Department and others. While it is difficult to attribute the cumulative impact of 17 years of synergistic assistance among donors to any one program or intervention, the report focuses on USG assistance generally and on USAID in particular. In addition, there were numerous other European efforts to help civil society in Romania during the years in question, so the overall U.S. effort must be viewed in that context as well.

The discussion in this report focuses on USAID programs and their impact. USAID provided assistance to CSO development in two ways: through sector-specific support in its three target areas (civic, social service and economic) and through direct CSO capacity-building programs. The report highlights some of USAID’s principal assistance, including, in particular, assistance that defined civil society development in Romania. The report distills lessons learned and best practices and discusses challenges remaining to the continued growth of a vibrant and healthy civil society.

3.1. SOCIAL SECTOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

3.1.1. Social sector context and USAID response

In the social service sector, USAID assistance to the development of civil society organizations focused primarily on CSOs working on issues of child welfare and reproductive health. These interventions were designed to address the long-term consequences of Ceausescu’s pronatalist policies (high rates of maternal mortality, abortion, unintended pregnancies and abandoned children and deficient state-run orphanages). Apart from a few parent associations for children with disabilities, almost no CSOs were working in the sector at the start of USG assistance, as all services were institutionally based. The social sector lacked specialists needed to deliver services. The university psychology departments had been closed down in the mid 1970s while no social workers had been trained since 1969.⁵ The entire



(Source: Data from Civil Society Development Foundation Database)

health and welfare system needed large-scale assistance and reform. U.S. and international Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) immediately started humanitarian assistance, and their programs and operations formed the models, and served as partners, for civil society development in the sector.

⁵ JBS International, *Romanian Child Reform Legacy Report*, 2007, p. 8.

As the humanitarian crisis in Romania abated, USAID assistance focused on establishing a community-based, family-focused system for child welfare and to improve women's health services and access. Pilot programs initially targeted selected CSOs and locations but over time expanded their reach through network development and innovative partnerships. Today, more than 600 CSOs are accredited as government contractors for social services.⁶

Child Welfare. International media coverage in 1989 of the plight of the more than 170,000 orphans and disabled children living in inhumane conditions in state institutions resulted in a massive response of international public and private emergency assistance. Initial USG assistance focused on providing food and improving conditions within institutions. Much of this came from or was channeled through large PVOs such as World Vision, Holt International and Bethany. Romanian legislation required international PVOs to register as Romanian entities, and over time most PVO offices within Romania assumed a Romanian identity and became full fledged Romanian CSOs.

With no government services provided outside institutions, PVO/CSO programs started pilot projects in health, education and life skills that became alternative models within the sector. Target groups expanded over time to include children with HIV/AIDS, young adults graduating from residential institutions, Roma and other vulnerable groups. USAID's geographic coverage also increased, and, working with the ChildNet Program, USAID used networks and subgrants for nationwide reach. The replication of these activities by CSOs throughout Romania (financed by USAID and other donors) created a system of community-based, decentralized services that have become the national standard.

The child welfare system was the first sector to be decentralized and to formalize the links between CSO service delivery and public administration. This effort was pushed by the EU, which linked child reform to negotiations on Romania's entry into the EU. USAID supported this process by providing sub-grants to CSOs to promote the child welfare reform agenda. USAID programs also supported the concept of public/private partnerships and contracting between local governments and CSO service providers. This was seen as a way to ensure the continuity of community-based services after the end of donor funding. The development of associations to promote child welfare reform coupled with advocacy training resulted in the adoption of the 1997 law on child protection and the creation of the National Department of Child Protection. Thus, NGOs had the legal framework in which to continue reform efforts and local partners with which to work. Moreover, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection was the first national public institution to implement Law 34/1998, which authorized funding of certain expenses incurred by the NGOs in providing residential social services by the state.

**SOME USAID CHILD WELFARE
PROGRAMS WITH CSO
COMPONENTS**

Child Net: 2001-2007. World Learning provided \$7.8m in 96 subgrants to 75 CSOs in over 90 percent of Romania's counties to continue child welfare reform by creating community-based services and improving standards and levels of professionalism.

Child Welfare and Protection: 1998-2002. World Vision provided subgrants to 22 CSOs in 3 counties for child reform and services.

CSO Strengthening: 1993-1995. Support Centers International provided capacity building to 71 local CSOs and created the Romanian Association for the Promotion of Social Work that is still active today.

Future of Romania (FOR) Children Project, 1992 – 1997. Holt International provided services to children as well as developing Romanian CSOs working in the sector (including Holt Romania).

⁶2006 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, p 183

SOME USAID HEALTH PROGRAMS WITH CSO COMPONENTS

Romanian Family Health Initiative (RFHI), 2001-2007. JSI provided \$7.2m in subcontracts to CSOs, including SECS, ARAS, PSI, Youth for Youth, and Eastern European Institute for Reproductive Health, to increase access to reproductive health services, and provide education and raise awareness on cancer, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

Partners Program, 2000-2002. Project Concern International placed 65 short-term U.S. volunteers to provide training and technical assistance to 48 Romanian organizations, including CSOs, in the child welfare and health sectors.

American International Health Alliance, 1998-2006. This was a regional project that supported, among other things, the creation of the Romanian Society of Breast Imagistics.

Direct USAID grants to CSOs: 1997-1999, included SECS, ARAS, and Youth for Youth to promote health care reform and complement U.S. PVO programs.

Family Planning Service Delivery: 1990-1996. CEDPA helped establish private family planning service delivery systems in Romania which included subgrants to SECS, ARAS and Youth to Youth.

Health. USAID health programs focused on increasing access to women's and child's health services and providing models for new standards of care, such as developing family planning clinics. Priority areas included reproductive health, prenatal and post-natal care, prevention of sexual transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, early detection and prevention of breast and cervical cancer, and family violence.

From the beginning, USAID supported the development of several CSOs in the health sector, which became its primary CSO partners. These CSOs included the Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality (SECS), the Romanian Association Against AIDS (ARAS), Youth for Youth Foundation, and Population Services International Romania (the latter is currently in the last stages of becoming a Romanian CSO).

Initially included as subgrantees in the Center for Development and Population Assistance (CEDPA) program, these CSOs later became direct USAID contractors. However, Mission consolidation of its management load resulted in these CSO programs being incorporated once again as subgrants under an umbrella program (RFHI). The RFHI program used these CSOs and others to implement technical interventions and fostered networks among them. These CSOs worked on new standards of care, a patient-centered focus to services and promoting quality. They also worked on public awareness programs and created networks of advocates for reproductive health services, policy reform and public financing for their services. With the end of USAID assistance to Romania in sight, RFHI also addressed sustainability issues, providing training in areas such as business development, accessing funds from other donors, proposal writing and monitoring and evaluation.

3.1.2. Findings

Creation of able CSO service providers. USAID assistance in the social service sector helped create a large pool of qualified CSOs and individuals in the child welfare sector and a handful of extremely strong CSOs in the reproductive health sector. These CSOs have become able service providers and, in some cases, strong advocates for the rights of their beneficiaries. They filled a significant gap when the private sector was nonexistent and the state was unable to provide adequate services. The CSOs pushed the reform agenda and trained government officials in new systems and better standards. They were able to respond more quickly than public service providers as they were flexible and had the organizational capacity to design, find donor funding for and implement projects. Because the environment for social service delivery is changing, however, CSOs in the social sector will need to adapt to the changing realities in order to survive and continue their programs. Among other things, the increased competition for funding is leading to CSOs that are becoming more specialized and professional.

Reform of the health and child welfare systems in Romania through CSO activities and advocacy. CSOs filled the void left by the government after the collapse of the communist health care system. The services provided by PVOs and CSOs and their pilot projects provided the models for community-based services and health and welfare sector reforms. USAID-funded training and capacity-building programs

created a body of experts within the sector who trained other CSOs, health and welfare workers and public officials, and developed the standards for service delivery throughout Romania. Child welfare service standards, developed by joint task forces of CSOs and government representatives, are currently the mandatory tool for the licensing of both public and private services.

Effective advocacy is still needed in the sector. Although the CSOs have occasionally proven to be powerful advocates on specific issues, maintaining that level of activity as the reforms become institutionalized and funding becomes scarcer will be difficult. As services are increasingly taken over by government, some CSOs expect their role to evolve into monitoring government performance and compliance with standards and regulations.

SETTING STANDARDS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Hospice, a USAID subgrantee, has become the model for public hospitals for palliative care. In addition it generated enough private funding to build a high-quality hospice and lobby successfully for member services across public hospitals throughout Romania.

Development of partnerships. A key evolution in the CSO service-provision sector was the development of partnerships, both among CSOs and between CSOs and the government, as well as the building of their ability to manage joint programs. Partnering was a natural evolution in Romania's transition, but a difficult one for both public officials and CSOs. Until donor conditions on funding forced partnerships, the relationships between government and CSO service providers was one of mutual mistrust and service deliveries on parallel tracks. This created vested interests in the status quo and unsustainable CSO services. But by the early 2000s, USAID not only required government-CSO partnerships, it took the concept to the next level by designing its programs around them. Child Net, for example, was designed to build these networks and facilitate substantive CSO-CSO and CSO-GOR joint activities and services.

PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

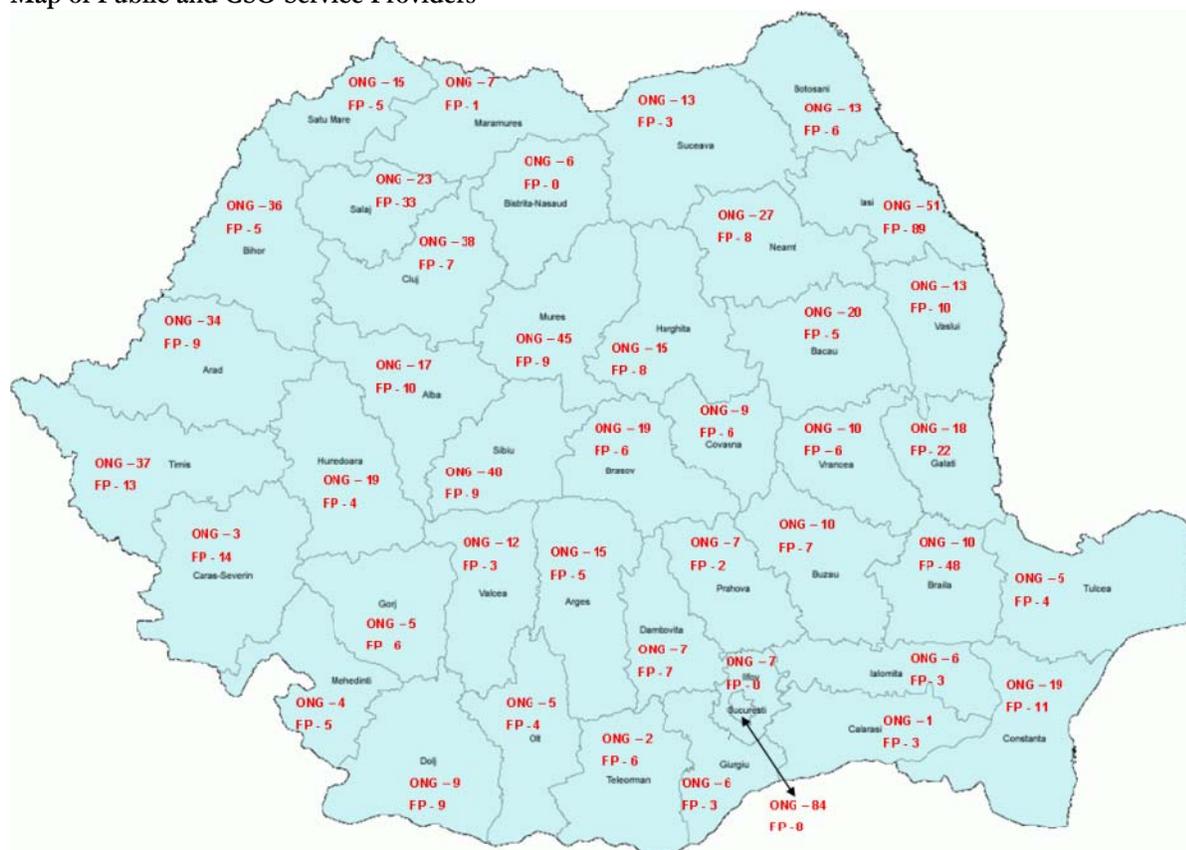
Social Alternatives (**Asociatia Alternative Sociale**) created a network of CSOs, public authorities, police and justice system on juvenile justice and the prevention of human trafficking. Their activism and expertise changed the face of the juvenile justice system in Romania. Their training of police in two counties in the northeast was so effective that the police are now replicating the program themselves in other counties. They also provide Social Alternatives with logistical support to implement some of their juvenile crime prevention programs in the region.

Child welfare programs were in the vanguard of developing partnerships. This partly resulted from the massive international assistance focused on addressing the problems of institutionalized children and active advocacy for systemic reforms. It was also the result of open-minded public officials, especially at the local level. Some of these officials had been on USAID-funded, joint CSO-government study tours and had seen U.S. community-based service programs and the working relationships among federal, state and local officials. An innovation of the USAID program was the

development of community boards for child protection. These included community members, CSO representatives and local authorities who identified children at risk and took early prevention measures. Mayors who had been on the study tours and/or trained by CSOs were early adopters of these boards, which spread rapidly from the 10 pilot boards in 10 counties sponsored in the USAID program to over 3,000 boards nationwide. The GOR formalized the use of boards to support local government child protection programs in 2004 (Law 272/2004).

Partnerships now exist throughout Romania to differing degrees. The division of responsibilities and the degree of institutionalization in many cases is still not clear. Although there are many examples of dynamic partnerships and innovative, sustainable programs, there are others that are moribund. Some CSOs report hostility from local officials who are not interested in real partnerships and joint activities. Successes show that a certain level of institutional capacity and maturity among partners is required as well as a shared vision of the program.

Map of Public and CSO Service Providers⁷



Source: Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile- Locul și rolul organizațiilor neguvernamentale pe piața de servicii sociale din Romania. (Civil Society Development Foundation – The place and role of nongovernmental organizations on the social service market in Romania) May 2007

Increasing government regulation and absorption of CSO services. After the government started to take the reform process seriously in 1997, it began the process to regulate the CSO service sector, which up to that time had been largely unregulated. These regulations and standards were to a large extent developed by CSOs through their service delivery models and advocacy. The Law on Local Public Funding 189/1998 allows local public authorities to subcontract public services.⁸ Law 47/2006, adopted to regulate the national system of social services and benefits, requires the creation of a social inspection system to evaluate and monitor all service providers. This has yet to be established.

At the same time, the government started to absorb areas of services that were once provided almost completely by CSOs, such as family planning and prevention of child abandonment. Many of these started as partnerships, whereby donor-funded CSO services were implemented under local government auspices. Some of these remained as CSO services subcontracted by local government, while in other cases they were

⁷ FP: Government services. ONG: CSO services

⁸ Governmental funding is available especially to CSOs active in social services delivery. Law 34/1998 allowed CSOs to receive funding from central or local government for social services delivery, even if there were limitations on eligible budgetary items. A more recent piece of legislation (Law 350/2005) improved the transparency of the process, although further steps are still necessary. For 2006, estimates are that the Romanian government has provided approximately €13 million in grants to 800 CSOs, the bulk of the funds being disbursed by the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Equal Opportunities and its agencies. (Estimates are from Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-sustainability Team (NESST), An analysis of the state of self-financing among civil society organizations in Romania, 2007.)

taken over by the public agencies themselves. In child welfare, for example, public authorities have taken over 70-80 percent of the services developed by CSOs.⁹ Although the government could subcontract these services to CSOs, many are said to prefer to keep the funding and implement the programs themselves. Local governments are now eligible for EU funding for services without CSO partnerships, which is creating new competition between some CSOs and local governments over funding. Government absorption of services has already resulted in some of the weaker CSOs ceasing operations. A concern heard during the Assessment from some CSOs is that the quality of services will be reduced when taken over by a public entity. Subcontracting and partnerships are not as advanced in the health sector, as legislation to authorize subcontracting still needs to be passed.

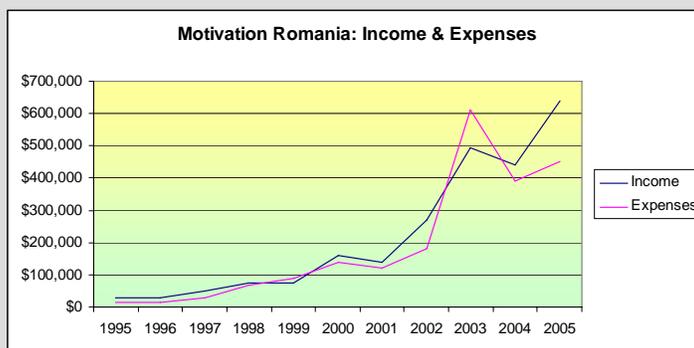
Future of CSO social service delivery. The relationship between CSO service deliverers and the government is complex. It is not only at the national level where policies are made and service providers are accredited, but it is at the local level where the CSOs must work in coordination with local authorities. Where there is a good history of cooperation, local authorities are likely to subcontract with CSOs for service delivery. However, CSOs are also expected to contribute additional funding for service delivery, which is difficult for some of the smaller organizations. In cases where the public authorities take over service delivery themselves, the CSOs will have to re-invent themselves to remain viable. Some CSO representatives noted, for example, the possibility of transforming their organizations into providers of training or into membership-based organizations that take a more active role in monitoring public services. Nevertheless, and despite advocacy efforts from many CSOs, government remains slow to contract out more services and to increase the level of payments for these services.¹⁰ The future direction of the government's role in service delivery also remains unclear; it is not evident whether it will continue to contract out social services or whether it intends to develop its own capacity to deliver social services.

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS
MOTIVATION ROMANIA**



(Source: Photo Provided by Motivation Romania)

Motivation Romania, a CSO dedicated to providing services for the disabled, used a USAID sub-grant to modernize its wheelchair production facilities and more than doubled its annual production. With a higher level of production, it was able to successfully bid as a supplier for insurance companies and is now generating a profit which it uses to subsidize some of its programs for the disabled.

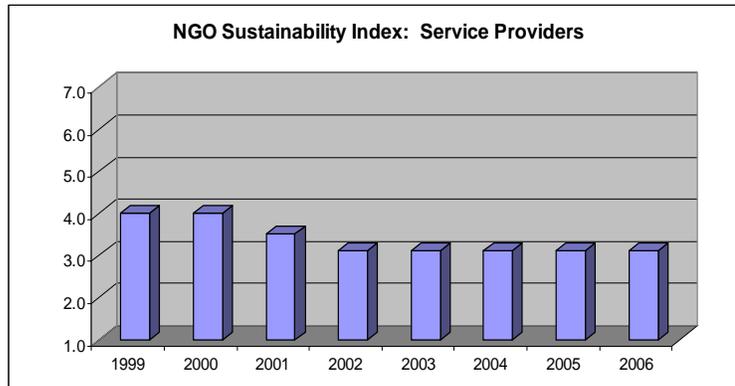


(Source: Reproduced from Motivation Romania's Annual Report 2005)

⁹ World Vision estimate.

¹⁰ NESsT- Social Enterprise in Romania, An analysis of the state of self-financing among civil society organizations in Romania, 2007.

Foundations of CSO financial sustainability. Although initial USAID assistance to the sector targeted building CSO service-delivery capacity, organizational development and sustainability became key components once the CSOs reached a certain level of maturity. For some child welfare organizations, this seemed to happen in the mid-1990s. The 1994 Children of Romania project, for example, did not implement its component to build “indigenous capacity” and management,



(Source: USAID Sustainability Index 2006)

as both USAID and the program implementer, PACT, determined that these activities were “not appropriate” at the time given the level of CSO development.¹¹ But by 1995, the SCI Romania Support project spent its last six months directly focused on CSO development rather than on the development of services in order to help ensure the sustainability of the service providers.

The definition of sustainability and the means of achieving it also evolved as conditions changed within the sector. It was initially defined in terms of CSOs diversifying donor funding, so many training sessions focused on proposal writing. As partnerships developed and legislation was enacted to authorize government contracting of CSO services, this topic was included in training. When USAID knew it was closing the Mission, it purposely included strategies for CSO sustainability into its remaining programs. Recent training has focused on private fund raising, corporate sponsorships, and entrepreneurial skills development so that CSOs could develop income-generating activities to help subsidize their services. Child Net estimates that more than 90 percent of the CSOs who received this training through their networks are sustainable through their partnerships and subcontracts with local government.

Use of networks to increase donor reach and CSO voice. Initial USAID projects in the sector tended to be pilot activities with a limited number of target areas, such as the World Vision Child Welfare and Protection program that worked with CSOs in three counties.



(Source: World Learning Website)

ChildNet Program 2002-2005 Medium Grants (up to \$150,000)

As a result, the subsequent program, Child Net, was able to reach almost 80 CSOs across Romania. (See map.) This system of networks and coalitions also helped the CSOs to replicate their models for social-service delivery and increase the efficacy of their advocacy through collective voice. For example, in 2006 with Child Net support, an early coalition of child-welfare CSOs, ProChild, (created through previous USAID programs, including the PARTENER Program) successfully merged with a parallel coalition (created with EU support). The resulting

¹¹ PACT, *Children of Romania, Final Evaluation*, p. 15.

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umbrella organization, FONProChild, is significantly stronger, with more than 110 member organizations. Similarly, in the health sector, USAID assistance resulted in the 30-CSO Coalition for Combating Domestic Violence, which is provided with secretariat support by RFHI.

3.1.3. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Best Practice	Lessons Learned	Impact	Challenges
Development of partnerships	CSOs and government working together improves public services and avoids developing unsustainable parallel systems. Donor condition of funding to partnerships will jump start this process.	Some genuine partnerships developed with effective programs that are being replicated throughout Romania.	Maintaining the partnership once the state has taken over the services and/or the primary funding ends.
Development of social enterprise as a model for CSO sustainability	Integrating sustainability issues into CSO programs as soon as the humanitarian crisis is over enables the forward planning needed for CSOs and their activities to become sustainable.	For CSOs with creativity and good organizational skills, income generation activities can result in profits that can help to sustain some of their nonprofit activities.	Ensuring income is enough to cover costs as well as generate a surplus that the CSO can use to implement some of its programs. Competing with the public and private sectors.
Setting standards	CSOs can provide the models and set the standards for service delivery through pilot programs, training of agents of change and advocacy.	Reforms throughout the health and welfare systems and better, more responsive public services.	Bureaucratic mindsets and vested interests
Effective networking	Use of networks and coalitions of CSOs expand donor reach and give CSOs a more powerful voice.	Sector reform and changes in public policy, legislation and funding.	Sustaining such coalitions after the immediate issue is resolved.

3.1.4. Challenges for the future

The primary challenges facing most service-sector CSOs are adapting to the changing situation within Romania and maintaining financial sustainability. Most were modeled on the large-scale international humanitarian assistance programs and PVOs that implemented these services on a donor-funded project basis. A few CSOs have developed a viable, long-term programmatic vision and have found funding to support their vision. The rest remain project-focused and still live from project to project. Developing a vision in a scarce funding environment will be difficult for many. It will require a mental adjustment for many of CSOs which are just now starting to grapple with the reality of going from favored (funding) partner to the competitive world of public subcontracting and fundraising. Some of these alternative fundraising mechanisms are discussed in Sections 4 and 5, but include private contributions through the 2 percent law,¹² income-generating activities and corporate sponsorships.

¹² The 2 percent provision allows Romanians to designate up to 2 percent of their annual income tax to be directed to an eligible CSO as sponsorship.

3.2. CIVIC WATCHDOGS AND PUBLIC POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

3.2.1. Civic context and USAID's response

The Ceausescu regime brutally oppressed all forms of opposition, atomizing society and eliminating civic life. In contrast to other regimes in the region, no process of liberalization took place in Romania during the 1980s. Instead, Ceausescu openly condemned and actively resisted the regional trend and increased efforts to punish any form of dissidence. Thus, at the time of the revolution, no civil society organizations existed, certainly not any civic watchdog or public policy groups.

The legacy of the Ceausescu regime significantly disadvantaged the civic sector. Although the regime trained ample engineers, mathematicians and scientists, it deliberately suppressed advancement in the social sciences. This policy, along with economic crisis and pervasive fear of the secret police, left few citizens in a position to fulfill leadership roles in the civic sector after the revolution.

As the transition progressed, the need for such civic organizations was great. The rapid pace of change associated with the Romanian revolution made it difficult for citizens to adjust to post-communist Romania. Despite obstacles, civic CSOs emerged after the revolution.

The most prominent was the Group for Social Dialogue. The Group's members were largely intellectuals and artists, many of whom had been dissidents under the communist regime. Their purpose was to stimulate public discussion regarding democratic citizenship and to monitor, if not influence, constitutional debates within the new regime. Various student groups also became active in civic affairs shortly after the revolution, especially in Bucharest and Timisoara. Other groups of note included Fratia (an independent trade union), the Group 16-21 December, the People's Alliance, the Anti-Totalitarian Forum, the Alternative Society, the Independent Group for Democracy, the Timisoara Society, and the Former Political Prisoners' Association.¹³

The May 1990 elections crystallized the efforts of these groups, which petitioned unsuccessfully to serve as domestic election observers. The balloting process saw some irregularities but was not characterized by systematic fraud.

Despite the problems associated with these elections, donors were satisfied that some form of regime change was taking place. Initial USAID overtures toward the civic sector concentrated on supporting the disparate groups who advocated for democratic reform and looked to further their development.

SOME USAID CIVIC SECTOR PROGRAMS WITH CSO COMPONENTS

Opening Politics by Acting Locally Program (OPAL) 2002-2007 NDI and IRI assisted CSOs with election-related programs, created an advocacy resource center (CeRe) and increased CSO leadership skills.

Democracy Network Program in Romania (DemNet) 1995-1999. World Learning, NDI and SCI provided training, TA and subgrants to CSOs active across USAID's focus sectors. 17 subgrants provided to CSOs for advocacy, 11 of these to civic, watchdog and environmental organizations including CENTRAS and APADOR-CH.

Constituent Services and Organizational Sustainability Program (CSOS), 1994-1998. NDI provided \$120,000 to ProDemocracy to support its activities and national networks.

Political and Social Processes Project, 1991-1997. Implemented in part by NDI, IRI and IFES, this project helped create and strengthen the primary civic sector CSOs (Pro-Democracy and CENTRAS) that are still active in Romania today.

¹³ National Republican Institute for International Affairs and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *The May 1990 Elections in Romania, International Delegation Report* pp. 8-9 (Washington, DC: IRI/NDI, 1991).

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USG assistance to the sector was organized initially under the regional SEED program. Democratization constituted one goal of this program, and assistance targeted CSO election-related activities (such as election monitoring), building citizen networks, and CSO monitoring and influencing policy-making.

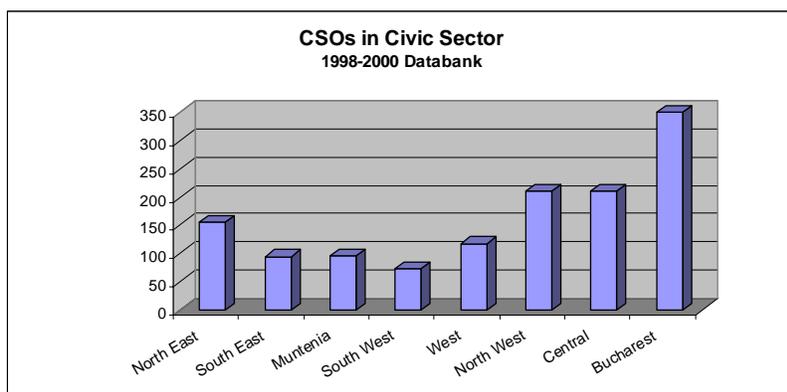
Initial USAID assistance supported the creation of two national organizations in the sector: Pro-Democracy Association (PDA) assisted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and CENTRAS assisted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). USAID also supported the activities of Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania-Helsinki Committee (APADOR-CH) through the German Marshall Fund. These three CSOs emerged as leading organizations in the civic sector. They fostered the creation of other civic CSOs, and many early activists from these three organizations remain active in the sector.

Beginning in 1994, USAID assistance programs recognized that CSO organizational capacity had improved among the CSOs founded in preceding years (in part because of USAID funding) and sought to support these core CSOs to become leading watchdog and public policy organizations. For example, NDI's CSO program supported the continued organizational development of PDA through training and technical assistance to its local branches and structural development, planning and financial sustainability. USAID also helped the Foundation for Local Development and Public Services (FDLSP) to design local government training programs. Over time, USAID's core CSO partners became increasingly independent and expanded their activities. As another example, when NDI began working with elected officials to promote outreach techniques and constituent relations, PDA was seen as a natural link between citizens and these officials. This role enabled PDA to build mutually positive and beneficial relationships with elected officials.

The mid-1990s saw a rapid growth of civic CSOs as the political climate continued to open. The DemNet program met the needs of these new organizations, which often possessed vague missions and low capacity. DemNet expanded its technical assistance and training to these new CSOs, investing heavily in human capital among the sector.

Over 300 CSOs received training under the DemNet program, including training on sustainability strategies, organizational management, and institutional development. The program also developed a series of manuals on these topics, which are still in use. Another innovation was the inclusion of advocacy training. Under the program, the term "advocacy" was introduced into the Romanian language.¹⁴ CSOs from all civil society sectors were included in advocacy training sessions, which helped build bridges across sectors.

Subsequent USAID assistance to the sector increasingly emphasized closer relationships between CSOs and



(Source: Civil Society Development Foundation Database)

government officials. The new strategic objective Improved Local Democratic Governance (IDLG) reflected USAID's move from direct CSO support to support of CSO-GOR relationships. IDLG continued to target particular civic CSOs such as PDA, but incentives favored building positive relationships with government bodies. CSOs were also encouraged to continue bridge-building efforts within the civic sector as well as to establish closer cross-sector links. With the eventual

¹⁴ World Learning, DemNet Final Report

termination of USAID civil society assistance programs in mind, USAID programs began to include efforts to ensure the sustainability of CSOs in the sector.

The most recent program, Opening Politics by Acting Locally (OPAL) program, implemented by NDI and IRI, focused on forging partnerships between CSOs in the civic sector and democratic political parties. Its chief objective was to stimulate activities to increase political participation and promote the democratic reform processes. CSOs assistance supported the implementation of election-related monitoring and awareness programs. OPAL also resulted in the creation of the Resource Center for Public Participation (CeRe), which will coordinate CSO advocacy efforts, recruit members to the sector, and build leadership skills.

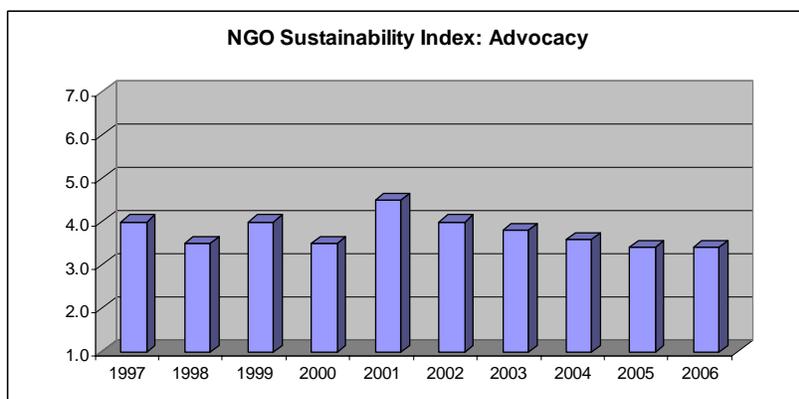
3.2.2. Findings

Development of sophisticated CSOs in the civic sector. USAID assistance made significant contributions to the creation and development of Romania’s civic sector, a sector that did not exist before 1990. Unlike other countries in the region, Romania experienced no political opening during the 1980s which would allow for even weak independent, civic-oriented organizations to exist. Seventeen years later, a core group of CSOs engaged in watchdog and public policy activities populate the sector. The sector also includes vibrant democracy groups focused on public involvement and groups that support CSOs generally.

“Advocacy is a process, not a grant, and USAID understood this.” (CSO leader)

Creation of civic watchdogs. USAID technical assistance, training and funding help build sophisticated watchdog activities that engage citizens, other CSOs, and government officials. Sustained support for watchdog groups also increases the credibility of such CSOs in the eyes of citizens, peers, and governing officials. For example, the Assessment team attended a conference sponsored by APADOR-CH (funded by RCSS) that reported results from monitoring Law 52/2003 (transparency in government and the use of public hearings). Participants included a diverse group of CSO leaders, some of whom had assisted in the monitoring effort, and government officials. The event was well attended and covered by the local media. The conference serves as an illustration of effective monitoring by a watchdog group.

Improving CSO relations with governing officials. USAID assistance facilitated positive CSO-government relationships through many of its programs. Most CSO leaders from the civic sector remain



(Source: USAID Civil Society Sustainability Index 2006)

skeptical of the potential of such relationships, and some are fearful of undue influence or government pressure. Many CSO leaders commented, however, on mutual positive changes in the attitudes of both CSOs and public officials and suggested that these relationships continue to evolve. CSOs are more willing to build partnerships with governing entities and accept funding when available. Public officials are increasingly more open to watchdog activities and public policy input. Despite improving CSO-GOR relationships, advocacy efforts remain static. (See chart.) The findings point to room for improvement for civic CSO-GOR relationships. Monitoring efforts have shared information with the media and public, but relatively few advocacy campaigns have had a strong influence on public policy outcomes.

Limited number of civic sector CSOs. Although the CSOs that operate in the civic sector tend to be strong organizations in terms of purpose, skills and capacity, the sector relies on one or two CSOs to fulfill

sector functions. Thus, if CSOs change their focus in an effort to attract funds, or are unable to become sustainable, the sector will feel an immediate impact from the loss. We have already seen this with regard to environmental groups, of which there are fewer today than ten years ago. USAID funding trends reflect this finding. Of the 17 projects funded under DemNet, seven addressed environmental issues. However, only one environmental group benefited from the RASP Program, and none of the 60 projects funded under RCSS were classified as environmental. This trend appears to be a general problem in Romanian society, one of “great concern” to CSOs working in the sector.

Encouragement of advocates across sectors.

Considerable overlap with CSOs in the social and professional sectors exists when considering the role these organizations play within civil society. For example, a large number of social and professional-sector organizations engage in advocacy campaigns and monitoring. The cross-sector support and advocacy activities strengthen lines of representation between citizens and public officials through CSOs. USAID

programs encouraged this overlap with advocacy training woven into nearly all of its assistance programs during the time period under consideration. Although the assessment reveals many successful monitoring efforts, limits in the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns were noted. In part, the limits stem from CSOs engaging in advocacy too late in the process of policy making. As one CSO leader mentioned, “Advocacy trainings are useful, but advocacy skills are learned by doing.” Moreover, USAID’s strategic shift from “retail” to “wholesale” funding shifted momentum from adversarial approaches to partnerships, forcing CSOs to lose some of their momentum. (This issue is discussed further in Section 4 below.)

SUCCESSFUL ADVOCATES

GRADO, used a USAID subgrant to coordinate a 33 CSO coalition advocacy campaign on domestic violence. The campaign resulted in modifying legislation and gaining CSO representation on relevant EU fund committees within the state.

APADOR-CH, which benefited from multiple USAID programs, is highly effective in influencing legislation. For example, in 1994 APADOR-CH, with USAID support, successfully campaigned to pass legislation that attached Romania to the *European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* and its *Additional Protocols*.

THE PRO-DEMOCRACY ASSOCIATION

In September 1990 a group of students from Bucharest and a dialogue group “The Opinion” which included intellectuals from Brasov, decided to create the Asociatia Pro Democratia (Pro Democracy Association-PDA) in order to promote civic education, support the democratization of public institutions, promote public participation in the decision making process and ensure free and fair elections in Romania. This union was a result of NDI noticing that both groups had similar objectives and suggesting that they join their efforts to build a strong national civic organization. NDI subsequently became the main international partner of The Pro Democracy Association in the 1990s.

In 1992, PDA organized Romania’s first candidates’ forums in more than 20 localities before the local and general elections. PDA currently has 30 clubs in which more than 1,200 citizens (members and volunteers) participate in programs on: strengthening the relation between the people and their elected representatives; observing the electoral process; civic education; citizens' participation in the process of public policy drafting; monitoring the transparency and accountability of public institutions; and the protection of human rights. Former PDA members can now be found in executive positions within other vital civic and watch-dog organizations, including APADOR-CH (human rights), ARC (advocacy/community foundation), Black Sea Trust (foundation), IPP (public policy analysis/watch-dog) and ProVobis (volunteer center).

Development of a culture of public service and activism. USAID programs contributed to the training of thousands of activists and produced a cadre of sophisticated leaders. Those leaders carry with them a wealth

of technical and organizational knowledge. At the same time, they also have adopted an ethos of public service and civic activism, truly believing in what they are doing and what they (and their organizations) represent. In short, USAID assistance has helped transfer the values and attitudes of good citizenship and the role of civil society in a democratic society.



(Source: Photo Provided by Timisoara Club)

Lasting impact from sustained interventions. In the absence of a civic sector, strong and sustained interventions that result in the creation of new CSOs have had a positive, long-term impact on the sector. Both PDA and CENTRAS established strong relationships with implementers (NDI and IFES, respectively), resulting in two anchoring CSOs in the sector and models for other organizations. These implementer-CSO relationships encouraged a level of trust and understanding that helped make the organizations successful. They also provided Americans with first-hand experience with the situation confronting the CSOs and the sector, which resulted in more effective interventions. An American implementer who worked on these programs during this period said the feeling was mutual: “You could spend a limitless amount of money, but if you have people on the ground, working shoulder to shoulder with Romanian activists, this had the greatest impact.”

Development of CSOs focused on strengthening civil society.

USAID assistance to CENTRAS supported a local civil society network that could multiply the effect of training received from USAID implementers like IFES. In 1994, CENTRAS held the first national CSO forum in Romania, which resulted in increased solidarity across sectors. Besides providing services to NGOs as a resource center, CENTRAS continues to represent civil society interests through advocacy campaigns.

Value of investment in human resources. Human capital investments, such as intensive training programs and study tours, add value because they increase the likelihood that when individuals leave the employment of a given CSO they will remain active in the sector. For example, when most PDA members leave the organization, they join other CSOs or begin new ones that fill gaps in the civic sector.

NATIONAL CSO FORUM

USAID sponsored the first national CSO Forum through **CENTRAS** in 1994 increasing solidarity among CSOs within, and across, sectors. According to one CSO leader interviewed, “it was reassuring that so many other people and organizations were out there doing what we were doing.”

The forum extended to the creation of the StrawberryNet project which promoted on-going exchanges among CSOs, and between CSOs and public officials. More than 100 CSO were in the network, which included an on-line data base of Romanian CSOs

3.2.3. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Best Practice	Lessons Learned	Impact	Challenges
Establishment of strong relationships between CSOs and implementers	In the absence of a civic sector, strong and sustained interventions that result in the creation of new CSOs with a civic purpose have a positive, long-term impact on the sector.	Development of anchoring CSOs in the sector and models for other organizations. Because the USG was a well liked and influential donor, sustained contact with USAID and its implementers increased the credibility of CSOs in the eyes of citizens, peers, and governing officials, resulting in more effective outcomes.	Ensuring sustainability for CSOs created from overt intervention since their creation was not based on widespread public demand.
Development of CSO advocacy coalitions	Programs that emphasize advocacy provide opportunities for cross-sector coalition-building which strengthens the civic sector image and legitimacy.	Improved legislation and increased CSO voice and representation.	Leadership of such broad coalitions involves additional costs to a CSO which are difficult to finance over time.
Advocacy components that allow CSOs an opportunity to build on their experience.	Approaching advocacy as a process not a grant is most effective when the funding agency emphasizes advocacy in all civil sector development programs.	Successful advocacy campaigns that influenced legislation and implementation.	Sustaining cross-sector advocacy campaigns and training new leaders in advocacy in the near-future
Support to the creation of CSO forums	Sustained support of CSOs that represent civil society and offer general support and services to other CSOs result in solidarity and synergies across sectors.	Sector benefits from quality local support and coordination with bridges to CSOs from other sectors.	Gaining sustainability for these CSOs that benefited from long-term donor support.

3.2.4. Challenges for the future

Sustainability is the biggest challenge facing Romanian civil society in the coming years. All CSOs will need to adjust to the new environment, but civic sector CSOs are the most vulnerable as a result of changes in funding sources in general and the departure of USAID in particular. The vulnerability stems from their unique position. As watchdogs and public policy organizations, they guard their independence from government or commercial influence. Indeed, their autonomy is necessary to the functions they perform. Their often-adversarial role, however, limits important sources of funding for the future. Perhaps the long-term funding from foreign donors such as USAID prevented civic sector CSOs from establishing the necessary relationships with the private sector or other foreign donors and grooming themselves to make these alternative sources more viable.

Those interviewed are feeling this vulnerability. “We are concerned but not panicked” is how one CSO leader phrased it. They are exploring a number of models for sustainability. Some are directing resources toward pursuing commercial components to their activities and developing private-sector relationships with a long-term approach. Others are exploring government partnerships and funding programs, including learning how to become eligible for EU structural funds. Still others see potential in becoming regional resources for CSO

training and support for international initiatives. Each approach has potential as well as drawbacks, but at this point it is impossible to predict what approach or combination of approaches will be successful.

Political development in Romania also affects civic sector CSOs directly. After the revolution, democracy was not a foregone conclusion for the country. Civic CSOs provided a timely and necessary voice for completing the transformation from authoritarian to democratic rule. Such organizations took the lead in pushing for continued reform of Romanian political institutions. With the consolidation of democratic institutions, however, that approach is increasingly problematic. As democratic consolidation proceeds, the demand for broad-based “democracy” CSOs declines, although there is still a role for advocates of good governance in a democracy. Thus, CSOs in the sector need to adapt to the changing political climate, and this challenge further complicates their efforts to achieve sustainability.

Decreasing number of environmental CSOs. Viable environmental CSOs appear to be in the decline. The reasons for this trend are beyond the scope of this assessment. However, CSO leaders interviewed suggested it is a combination a scarcity of funds and a decline in voluntarism. Volunteers for environmental causes are becoming increasingly difficult to attract, particularly relative to other volunteer opportunities, due to changing economic and social conditions in the country.

3.3. PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

3.3.1. Professional sector context and USAID’s response

As with the civic sector, conditions under Romania’s communist regime did not allow for independent professional associations. Numerous professional and civic associations existed, but they were in no way independent of the omnipresent state or party apparatus. Thus, women’s associations, scientists associations, youth associations and the like existed, but they were essentially arms of the state. As this was an opportunity for the state to further control these groups, rather than for these groups to have an influence on state behavior, they could not be called real organs of civil society.

There were no business associations during the communist era because there was no private enterprise in Romania at that time. While some cooperatives existed, for example in manufacturing and tourism, they were not independent of the state and so were not CSOs in any meaningful way. Early post-communist civil society, while largely a blank slate, did have some historical antecedents. There were businesses and associations in the pre-communist period, some of which were able to revive themselves in the 1990s. The Timisoara Chamber of Commerce, for example, existed for almost a century before being dismantled by the communists. It re-emerged in 1990 and presents itself as having been founded in 1850.

Economic reform and rebuilding of the private sector was a major focus of USAID assistance to Romania under the SEED Act. Stability and lasting democratic reform was seen as dependent in large part on rapid economic reforms. In the initial years, more than 50 percent of USAID’s portfolio went to assist economic freedom and growth. USAID support for professional associations was related to efforts to privatize the Romanian economy. The creation of professional associations was not an original target of this assistance. Instead the approach was to draw on American experience to maximize the benefits of cooperation among individual private producers through advisory services in agricultural organization and management systems. Associational development emerged as an outgrowth of these trainings and informal discussions.

Business associations, and the CSOs that sought to support them, helped make private businesses in Romania competitive with the state enterprises that had enjoyed a monopoly in the communist system. They helped to increase access to business and technical information that was necessary for the emerging private sector to become economically competitive. In addition, as these organizations became stronger, USAID assistance helped them develop advocacy programs for more liberal and free market policies. USAID aimed to expand the market-driven private sector by including training and technical assistance to, among other things,

improve government policies and regulations, strengthen business-related CSOs and government institutions, and promote the transfer of remaining state assets to private ownership. Initially, individual association directors were targeted, with USAID assistance tailored to build their capacity to understand, develop and improve the functioning of an industry association in a market economy.

Economic reforms in Romania were limited until the elections in 1996 brought in a reformist government that adopted a comprehensive reform program. USAID strongly supported this reform program, focusing its 1998-2000 strategy around it. “Retail”-level funding to individual enterprises and businesses was phased out, and a new comprehensive agribusiness project was designed to undertake policy reform and provide technical assistance at the “wholesale” level. Among the changes was a new focus on producers’ associations in order to privatize and maximize Romania’s comparative advantage in agribusiness. Many trainees in USAID’s agribusiness Exchange Program for Central and Eastern Europe expressed frustration about their inability to effect change in the agricultural sector. USAID assistance then ensured associations received advocacy training on how to become effective, well-organized policy advocates for changes in the agricultural sector.

Over time, USAID focus on association building expanded to include Chambers of Commerce and associations in tourism, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Internet Technology (IT), and business-support organizations (BSOs). Assistance to professional associations also expanded to include local government associations and associations of professionals working in government.

CHF implemented several programs to provide technical assistance to local CSOs and others on access to credit. This started as a pilot project in Timisoara in 1994 and was expanded in 1999 to five western counties. It included institutional strengthening of member-based business associations, chambers of commerce and housing federations. Training facilitated the transition of partner associations to economically sustainable organizations through the provision of demand-driven services to their members. CHF also coordinated the assistance of the Overseas Cooperative Development Council, a group of U.S. cooperative development organizations that worked closely with business associations, housing federations, agricultural associations, cultural institutions and social-service organizations.

The Romanian Business Association Development Project, implemented by the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), directly targeted business associations. This program helped build capacity for business associations, as they played a valuable role in providing expertise and support to SMEs. It provided subgrants for alliance building so business associations could increase their ability to market their programs and services, develop trade opportunities, and strengthen advocacy. In addition, BSOs were provided subgrants to strengthen their strategic planning, governance and membership. Increasing the capacity of business-support organizations was important, as they play a valuable role in providing expertise and support

**SOME USAID
PROFESIONAL SECTOR
PROGRAMS WITH CSO
COMPONENTS**

Enterprise Development and Strengthening Program (EDS) 2002-2007. CHF worked to improve the environment for business which included strengthened institutional development of private sector associations.

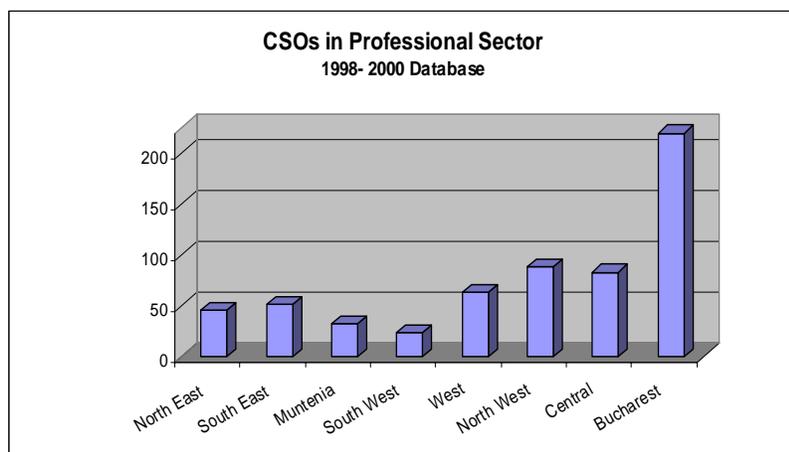
The Romania Agribusiness Development Project (RADP) 2005-2007 Chemonics agribusiness project included strengthening support for 9 associations.

Romanian Business Association Development Project (RBAD) 2000-2003. CIPE provided more than \$320,000 to business associations for alliance building, BSO capacity building and advocacy.

Integrated NGO and Economic Development (INED) Program, 1999-2003. Implemented by CHF, 25 CSO partnerships were created around the issue of economic development and access to credit.

Local Government Assistance Program (LGAP) 1999-2001. RTI supported the development of local government associations, and to help professional associations differentiate themselves from national associations.

Bettering Agricultural Policy Program (ABE) 1996. Association building was among the activities supported by this project.



(Source: Civil Society Development Foundation Database)

3.3.2. Findings

As USAID prepares to leave Romania, its impact on Romanian professional associations is perhaps best described as modest in terms of resources allocated, but pivotal in terms of impact. For the most part, professional associations require less of a financial investment than other types of civil society organizations. These associations do not deliver expensive services, nor do they require donors to support large staffs or the like. Thus, for the most part, financial support for professional associations has been more modest than for other sectors of civil society. Similarly, USAID programs did not seek to set up professional associations that would need to depend on continued assistance from USAID for their continued survival. By their nature, professional associations must rely on dues and other membership-related fees and have a natural membership base on which to draw for this.

The most successful associations have changed how policy in their particular sector is made. Local government associations, such as the Association of Communes and Small Towns (ACOR), now have a seemingly permanent seat at the government table representing the interest of local authorities at the central level. Similarly, agricultural policy makers, whether in the government ministries or in the legislature, must take the views of key associations such as the Wine Exporters and Producers Association of Romania (APEV), the Romanian Association of Meat Processors (ARC), or the National Association of Private Millers and Bakers (ANAMOB) when making agricultural, and in some cases, trade policies, as they often serve on policy-making committees with legislators and representatives of the government. These business associations, as well as other business support CSOs, including Chambers of Commerce, have also contributed to Romania's economic development through a variety of training programs for SMEs, micro-loans, promotional activities, and other projects.

BUSINESS ASSOCIATION DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

USAID's Romanian Business Association Development program reported the following results over the life of the project (2000-2003):

- Membership in business associations rose by 34.3 percent
- Business associations sent 42 public policy advocacy proposals to the GOR.
- Romanian business associations initiated 28 joint venture, import-export transactions, and technology transfers that created over 400 jobs and generated investment of more than \$1.2 million.
- More than 28 business associations achieved financial sustainability.

Although not all of these results can be attributed solely to the CIPE program, Assessment interviews indicate that CIPE played a key role in the development and strengthening of these business associations.

to SMEs. The program led to the creation of the Advocacy Academy in Timisoara, which still provides associations with advocacy training, research and support for advocacy campaigns.

Associations also benefited from assistance provided by other direct and cross-sector CSO strengthening programs, such as RCSS, RASP and others. These programs (discussed in more depth in Section 4), directly addressed issues such as institutional capacity, sustainability and development of member services.

Strong associations of the kind developed in Romania offer some very direct and tangible benefits for their members, including expanded business opportunities, access to information and technical expertise, and a stronger voice in government. This is true of both private and public sector associations. However, associational life, as presented by numerous scholars of democracy beginning with de Tocqueville, is also a key component of democracy, and the habits of cooperation, trust and collective action learned through associational life can be carried over to civil life more broadly and have a less direct but equally valuable impact on democratization.

The Assessment Team sought to explore this question about the relationship between professional associations and democratization in Romania. In conversations with representatives from the various associations, the team raised the question of whether they thought that their members viewed themselves and their roles and responsibilities differently as a result of their experiences as members of a professional or other association.

The responses were mixed. Some of the people did not really understand the question at first. When it was rephrased, they tended to report that their members had not changed substantially in the ways they conduct themselves in Romania's new democracy. There were, however, some exceptions. The representatives of both ANAMOB and ARC commented on the strength of democratic life within the association. Elections and decision-making in these associations are generally fair and transparent. The representative of ARC also reported that members of that association are increasingly involved in civic life more generally, notably through their increased contributions to various CSOs and charities since the enactment of the 2 percent law.

More specific findings are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Associational life is strong but imbalanced, as some sectors of the economy are organized and others are not. While strong professional associations exist in some private and public sectors, there are still many areas of the economy where associations, particularly strong ones, are difficult to find. Uneven associational development is found in most countries, so this is not an unusual problem, particularly in a country less than two decades removed from a relatively strong authoritarian regime. Nonetheless, this imbalance is worth noting.



(Source: Photo Provided by CIPE)

In the food production sector, processors tend to be better organized than those who produce the raw materials. For example, there are strong associations for millers and bakers, meat processors and winemakers, but we were unable to identify comparable organizations for wheat, livestock or grape farmers. This situation introduces some inequality into the political process, as the interests of one group are heard while those of another in the same sector are not. Similarly, the tourism sector taken as a whole tends to be better organized than, for example, the manufacturing sector; thus, there is the potential for uneven influence over government decision-making about what industries to promote and in what economic

direction to move the country. Again, this type of inequality is not unique to Romania and, given the strong associational infrastructure and understanding to which USAID contributed, may lessen with time, as more associations are formed and civil society continues to evolve.

The USAID strategy of association building as an outgrowth of technical and business support was very successful. Association building is difficult work in post-authoritarian countries like Romania, where civil society was virtually nonexistent under the previous regime. Explaining the rationale and value of

associations to an audience that has had little positive experience with that kind of collective action is not easy. Asking businesses to form an association because it is good for them is not the best approach to association building. USAID did not do this way, however. Instead, USAID and its implementing partners were able to show businesses and others why associations were in their interest.

In some cases, the idea for associations came from American consultants who had come in not to work on association building but to offer technical support on issues ranging from grinding wheat to business consulting. These consultants were able to speak with Romanian businesspeople in a language they could understand, that of business and economic self-interest. For example, as an outgrowth of their participation in the agribusiness trainings, the flour millers initiated the development of an association. As a result, the Romanian National Private Millers and Bakers Association (ANAMOB) is now registered as a private, democratically controlled institution representing the interests of private millers and bakers in Romania. More importantly, professional associations such as this emerged and developed as result of the evolution and needs of various economic sectors. Thus, USAID's support in promoting tourism or improving the situation in agriculture led in a natural way to the creation of associations as professional and committed partners in the process.

USAID implementers were able to help these associations develop and grow once they had started, but they were rarely responsible for forming these associations. Instead, the initiative came from the businesses themselves. The exception to this is the various organizations within the government such as local governments or communes. In these cases the USAID played a more direct role in the formation of associations.

Low-budget USAID program investments contributed substantially to the evolution of associations.

Some of the most successful professional associations received modest, but very strategic and effective, support from USAID. The ARC (see box) benefited both from technical workshops and advice specific to its sector and from a study tour of the U.S. that took members to important meat processing states such as Wisconsin and Illinois as well as to Washington DC, where they learned about the lobbying and advocating process. Similarly ANAMOB benefited from a combination of technical advice and study tours. Neither of these organizations received operating or other core funding from USAID. Today, both these organizations play important roles in agricultural policy-making in Romania and offer valuable services to their members.

USAID implementers brought in strong consultants who were able to offer valuable and applicable advice to a range of organizations, especially in their early formative years. Several Romanian CSOs stated expressly that USAID funded consultants were the best with whom they had worked. The number of people interviewed who could cite the names and impact of individual experts was striking. In many cases, these experts had not been in Romania for a decade or more.

U.S. models for associations were replicated successfully in the food and tourism sectors, and in some chambers of commerce, and are providing members

with good services and representation. Romanian professional associations have relied heavily on US models. In many cases, representatives of a given association told us that they based their association directly on a U.S. model, in some cases contrasting American and European models and evincing a preference for the former. Organizations such as the Wine Exporters and Producers Association or the Timisoara Chamber of Commerce do not look substantially different, although perhaps somewhat smaller, than their American

**ASSOCIATIONS AS BY-PRODUCTS
OF SECTOR SUPPORT**

Rather than seeking to create a business association in the meat processing sector and establishing a program to do this, USAID, as well as the USDA, sent consultants to Romania in the mid-1990s to offer technical expertise to the newly formed private firms in the meat processing field. During one of the informal discussions surrounding the workshops, the American consultants raised the idea of a business association and how it could play a valuable role in the industry. The ARC association grew from this idea and was further supported by technical expertise, training and capacity building programs offered by USAID to associations and CSOs. Today ARC is a self-sustained organization offering valuable services to its constituents.

counterparts would look. These organizations have also brought a commitment to provide services, representation and advocacy for their members that can be found in most American trade associations.

Romania provides a striking counter-example to those who argue that American models and cases are too specific to the U.S.'s economic and political realities, or that organizations must reflect the culture of the country in which they are formed. Business leaders were grateful for the opportunity to learn from American models, and in most cases hoped that such opportunities would continue even after USAID's departure.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEAT PROCESSORS (ARC)

ARC is a professional association representing Romania's private meat processing firms. It is a membership based organization and is financially self-sufficient, raising its money from membership dues and fees for use of its laboratory. It offers its members key services including:

- *Advocacy.* This is not so much advocacy through mobilization of members, the media, public information campaigns or the like, but rather through being a voice of the industry in negotiations and discussions with the government.
- *Business and Trade Promotion.* ARC offers their members numerous promotional and export oriented opportunities through trade fairs, access to European markets and promotional materials.
- *Information and Technical Support.* The association offers their members a great deal of information about developments in the industry, technological advances related to meat processing, relevant changes in European and Romanian laws and upcoming training opportunities and workshops. This is done mostly through electronic communications and the association's website.
- *Laboratory Testing.* The association owns a laboratory which their members can use to test their products for germs and other contaminants. Members must pay to use this facility, but the proceeds go back to the association to fund their various activities.

USAID played a critical role in its establishment as it was created out of informal discussions with an American expert at a USAID-funded sector workshop. It was further supported by USAID training and capacity building programs and an influential 1996 study tour of the US. ARC representative spoke of the impact of this tour as though it had just occurred--they visited meat processing firms and facilities in Wisconsin and Illinois to gain some technical expertise and discuss the business with their American counterparts as well as to Washington DC to meet with representatives of the meat lobby in the US and learn about the lobbying and legislative aspects of American association.

Advocacy components of associations in assistance are important. Many professional associations were strongest in their ability to provide services to members. While this is a key component of professional associations, these associations also have a political role that is equally important. The advocacy skills of most professional associations, however, were not as strong. They did not have a strong understanding of various advocacy and media techniques and did not engage as heavily in the political arena as they might. Some indicated that they expected the Advocacy Academy to advocate for them. For most associations these skills are a natural next step from the work they are currently doing. The question of whether or not they will be able to take this next step in the absence of USAID support remains unanswered.

Among the results, several trade associations in the food industries developed relationships with key government decision-makers in their field so that their members have a voice in governance. Although not quite the same as an advocacy strategy that would engage members, the media or perhaps the broader public, these associations are able to influence public policy and have a voice in governance through relationships they have developed with relevant government authorities. To a great extent in Romania, what we might think of as advocacy occurs largely through smaller private meetings between leaders of various associations and the government. While this approach is not without drawbacks, it is a useful first step for associations who seek to ensure that their members are not shut out of governance questions entirely.

Associations can flourish and have a role to play regardless of the level of economic development in a particular region. Organizations such as Chambers of Commerce play a critical role in representing businesses in less economically prosperous parts of the country. It is precisely in these areas where business

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VASLUI

Vaslui county is the poorest area in Romania, with high rates of unemployment and few large companies. Yet it has an active and effective Chamber of Commerce providing its members with valuable services.

300 enterprises are members of the Chamber (out of 500 businesses active in the county). Dues from these businesses cover some of the chamber's operations services, including:

- Free information on EU and Romanian legislation, economic and fiscal policies, funding sources and technical expertise for SMEs;
- Fee based services to support new business creation, provision of certificates of origin for export purposes; and business-related training.

USAID assistance through CIPE proved instrumental to the development of the member-focused Chamber. It benefited from the expertise of a CIPE expert over a six month period who provided tailored advice and mentoring on lobbying and advocacy, developing services for members and identifying alternative sources of income.

associations are most needed because of local governments that may be less supportive of businesses and other structural impediments to business development. The Assessment found that Chambers of Commerce in several parts of Romania with varying degrees of prosperity were able to support businesses in their regions through training programs, promotion of their members' businesses and other similar activities. By offering support to Chambers of Commerce, business and professional associations, and SMEs throughout Romania, USAID had an impact on economic growth throughout the country, not just the more prosperous and western-leaning regions.

Effective interventions included strong communication between implementing partners and recipient organizations. The quality of training programs, trainers and overall advice and technical expertise is central to the impact of USAID programs. Once a good provider of technical expertise is identified, a good practice is to stay with that technical expert. A

number of associations were pleased that they were able to work with key consultants in a longer-term and ongoing way. By bringing the same consultants back, or keeping these consultants in country for longer periods of time, projects help local organizations to build relationships and trust with their consultants. The consultants, in turn, are able to become more familiar with the specific challenges facing the organizations they are assisting.

3.3.3. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Best Practice	Lessons Learned	Impact	Challenges
Include advocacy components in assistance	Associations need to focus on advocacy to improve the legal environment for business as well as improve their member services.	Greater impact on business-related legislation and more public and transparent advocacy by associations.	Understanding and seeing their role in more expressly political or public forms of advocacy.
Assisting associational development in less prosperous parts of the country in addition to the more affluent regions.	Associations can flourish and have a role to play regardless of the level of economic development in a particular region.	Economic development is more balanced throughout the country.	Working with weaker businesses and local governments that are less open to working with CSOs.
Identification of good experts and use of them over time.	The value of high quality expertise increases as time goes by and the relationships between the consultant and organization is strengthened.	Greater impact on CSO and the development of long term mentoring relationships.	Identifying and recruiting top consultants.
Incentives for joining associations are clear and concrete	Opportunities for relevant technical expertise and expanded markets are key incentives to forming associations.	Associations are formed more quickly and their foundations are stronger and more organic.	Persuading businesses and other professionals that the benefits of associations are real and concrete.

3.3.4. Challenges for the future

During its time in Romania, USAID's contributions to associational life have been significant. This is most clearly seen in the emergence of numerous professional and business associations that have had a meaningful impact on the country's economic and civic development. In general, this sector is relatively advanced, but there will be some challenges facing associational life in Romania during the next few years. As the political context evolves, associations will need the skills to engage more directly and publicly in political activity. This need arises at a time when the training and other opportunities that existed for many years are being phased out. In addition, while associational life in Romania is strong, it is far from complete. Industries such as agricultural production that are more difficult to organize will struggle to develop associations so that the many Romanians in those economic sectors can be represented as well.



(Source: Photo Provided by Anis)

Successful associations in Romania already get most of their funding from membership dues and other fees, only receiving grants for special projects from USAID or other donors. For those organizations that are already strong, sustainability does not raise a major challenge. For economic sectors that are not yet organized, however, the absence of support from USAID will raise some problems. Study tours, technical assistance and other ways to learn about the roles and value of professional association came from foreign funders. Unless other donors provide these types of programs, it will be more difficult for new associations to form.

3.4. DIRECT CROSS SECTOR CSO DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the development of CSOs as implementers of USAID programs in its three main sectors, USAID developed a number of programs that directly supported CSO institutional development and capacity building. Most of these were designed to strengthen CSO capacity to deliver services and advocate within a sector and to help ensure institutional sustainability once USAID funding ended. The focus of the capacity-building programs evolved as the CSO sector matured, starting with immediate necessities such as developing basic reporting and financial systems and later becoming more targeted towards organizational development and diversifying funding sources.

In the mid- to late 1990s, the TRANSIT program arranged for individuals within CSOs and government to go on

SOME USAID PROGRAMS FOR CSO CAPACITY BUILDING

Romanian Civil Society Strengthening Program (RCSS) 2005-2007. World Learning program to encourage partnerships and strengthen the financial, organizational and advocacy capacity of CSOs as well as to reform the legal framework that supports CSO development.

Governance Reform and Sustainable Partnerships (GRASP) 2002- 2004. DAI program to link government and CSOs in service delivery, professional and civic sectors. \$1.7m provided to CSO projects.

Romanian-American Sustainable Partnerships (RASP) 2000-2004. World Learning program provided \$2.7m in subgrants to 32 subgrantees to develop partnerships between Romanian institutions (including CSOs) and US organizations in the social, professional and civic sectors.

TRANSIT 1996 -1998 World Learning program providing cross-cutting training support to all USAID strategic objectives, including building capacity of individuals within CSOs and building leadership networks to act as agents of change.

study tours to see model U.S. organizations in action. As the program progressed, the focus shifted towards group empowerment, providing follow-up for the groups of individuals that had gone on the tours to help them apply in practice what they had seen in the U.S. and to help develop networks of agents for change. A later program, RASP, promoted the development of direct partnerships between Romanian institutions, including CSOs, and American counterparts to help strengthen CSO development and connect Romania more firmly with the larger international community. That project developed partnerships and joint projects in almost half of Romania’s counties.

The current CSO strengthening program, RCSS, was designed when USAID knew the SEED program in Romania was ending. It built upon the foundations provided in earlier programs, funding 60 projects in USAID’s three main sectors. This assistance was tailored to each CSO’s needs and directly focused on strategic planning and building CSO capacity to develop alternative sources of income, such as income generation, utilizing the 2 percent law, or accessing new sources of EU funds.

In between the RASP and RCSS projects, USAID sponsored two other programs that targeted CSO development. The first was the DemNet program which ended in 1998 as USAID’s strategy switched from “retail” (many private sector/CSO partners) to “wholesale” (government). As discussed in the civic section, DemNet provided 17 grants to CSOs.

The other was GRASP, a large scale program to improve local government performance, build partnerships between government and civil society and strengthen CSO and associational capacity. The local initiatives component, including building skills within local government units and CSOs using customized, demand-driven assistance, focused on solving concrete problems. GRASP assisted 105 CSOs with strategic planning and organizational development and created 109 new services.

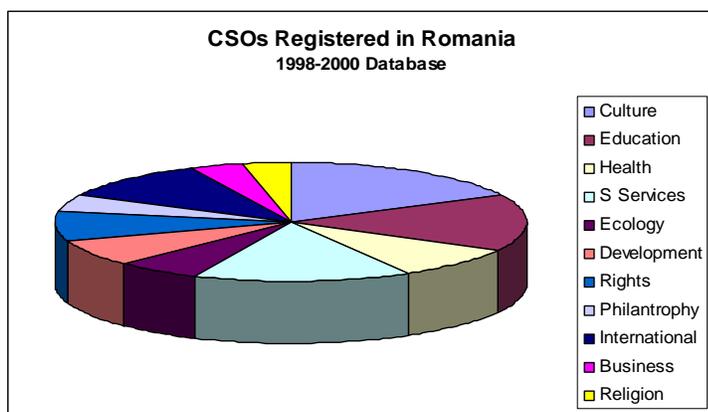


Figure 1 (Source: Civil Society Development Foundation Database)

Gender was a cross-cutting issue for most USAID CSO development programs and in sector-specific programming. Sector-specific programs included WID (women in development) components and the involvement of some women’s organizations and groups. Trainings sought to achieve gender balance. For example, the TRANSIT program had a target of 50 percent female participants for its US study tours (which it exceeded).¹⁵

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3.4.1. Findings

USAID’s strategy followed the evolution of the CSO sector and was flexible enough to take advantage of windows of opportunity and to meet unforeseen CSO needs. Its programs were designed to meet the challenges of CSO development at that period in Romania’s transition. This enabled the development of appropriate responses and programs that directly targeted the specific needs of CSOs at that point of their organizational development. USAID’s programs had specific objectives and activities, yet left enough flexibility for implementers to respond to evolving CSO needs and to take advantage of windows of opportunity to push the reform agenda and strengthen civil society. They also enabled the provision of individualized support to help CSOs solidify their institutional capacity and financial viability, especially as USAID assistance phased out.

¹⁵ USAID Annual Report 1998. p 37

Sustained support for CSO development had several different impacts:

- **It provided some CSOs in USAID’s target sectors with operational security as well as an irreversible transfer of attitudes.** USAID provided core CSO partners with a sense of operational security, as its programs continued to include them for more than a decade. USAID’s strategy (except for the two cases noted below) also was consistent in its approach to CSO development, and this predictability was helpful. Assistance included mentoring and moral as well as financial support, which was especially useful in the difficult early years of the transition. Continued interaction with USAID implementers and exposure to working models in the U.S. resulted in the transfer of models, democratic values and attitudes. Moreover, USAID-funded projects stressed CSO standards of behavior and capacity-building to achieve such standards, for example the “Strengthening Third-Sector Legitimacy” programs under the RCSS program.
- **It created donor-dependencies and project-focused perspectives.** Sustained support resulted in many CSOs operating on a project basis, which developed CSOs’ relationships with donors more than with the community. This issue is also discussed in the *Romanian Child Welfare Legacy Report*, which found that donors helped CSOs develop the capacity to deliver donor-funded services, but that CSOs tended to respond to the donor’s stated needs, rather than to develop a community base, which the *Legacy Report* sees as needed for CSO sustainability.¹⁶ Another point, raised by the *2006 NGO Sustainability Index*, is the growing competition between the private sector and CSOs for fee-based services. It speculates that since donor-funded services through CSOs were usually free, the public is more likely to pay for a private sector service than for a fee-based service from a CSO.¹⁷

CSO development was a collaborative effort between USAID, its implementers and CSOs. Strategy and program development for civil society and sector strengthening appeared to be a collaborative process. USAID solicited CSO input into its strategy and program designs and the CSOs felt that USAID had an open door. This collaboration extended to CSO-government partnerships through USAID’s implementers as the reform movements gained momentum and joint programs and partnerships were sought. CSOs, implementers, USAID, and the government overwhelmingly characterized these relationships as positive in interviews.

CSO assistance programs in Romania are bearing fruit in the region. Some of USAID’s core partners have reached the level of technical expertise where they are now providing expertise outside of Romania. This growth was encouraged by USAID programs that linked CSOs and their programs with similar CSOs and programs in the region, and through CSOs that obtained donor funding for cross-border and regional programs. For example, in 2000-2001, USAID funded the American Development Foundation (ADF) to implement the Romanians for Serbian Democracy program. ADF provided Romanian CSOs with technical assistance and funding to strengthen Serbian CSOs and encourage democratic development in Serbia.

The export of Romanian CSO expertise has become a growing trend. Romanian CSOs are providing increasing levels of cross-border and regional training in areas such as juvenile justice, anti-trafficking, and election monitoring. This international exposure as the implementer of an assistance program is further strengthening their organizational capacity as well as replicating the good models developed through USAID assistance in Romania. This means that Romanian CSOs will need to compete with CSOs and consulting firms from Western Europe and the U.S., which should also help to strengthen their institutional capacity.

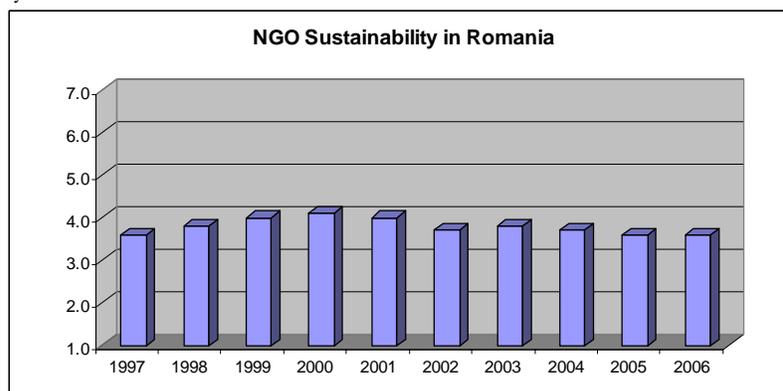
USAID was consistent in its strategy and built a momentum for CSO development, except on two occasions, when the end of its CSO programs adversely affected the sector. As discussed in Part One: Background, USAID made a U-turn in its strategic approach in 1997, switching from a “retail” strategy of supporting many private sector and CSO partners to a “wholesale” program of supporting the public sector.

¹⁶ JBS International, *Romanian Child Welfare Legacy Report*, 2007, p 17

¹⁷ *2006 NGO Sustainability Index, Romania*, p 183

This change in strategy demoralized the sector and created an immediate financial crisis for the activities of core CSO partners, especially in the civic sector, where USAID was the primary donor. USAID returned to a more integrated approach in its next country strategy but, even though this was only a few years later, momentum had been lost. This was reflected in a backwards slide in the 1999 and 2000 NGO Sustainability Index for both sustainability and advocacy. This slide is also attributable to the decrease and/or delay in other donor funding, such as the Open Society Institute and EU-Phare.¹⁸

The second switch was the early termination of the GRASP project, due to the reevaluation of USAID/Romania's programs to ensure that targeted assistance was provided to Romania prior to EU accession. However, USAID's way of terminating a large scale nationwide program could have benefited from more transparency and candor.



(Source: USAID Sustainability Index 2006)

3.4.2. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Best Practice	Lessons Learned	Impact	Challenges
Incorporation of sustainability elements from the start of all CSO assistance.	Sustainability is more than the ability to write proposals to access other donor funding. It requires time and strategic long term planning within each CSO.	Avoids creating donor dependency, entitlement mentalities and creates viable institutions.	Overcoming donor tendency to focus on immediate needs (such as getting a CSO service delivery up and running) instead of seeing how meeting the immediate needs can fit into a longer term sustainable context.
Use of a consistent strategy and approach to CSO development.	Predictability of donor funding and support aids nascent civil society organizational and service development.	CSOs more likely to develop a vision and perform long term strategic planning if a donor's intention to support a sector is clear.	Difficulties for donors to maintain consistency through staff rotations, funding cycles and changes in funding priorities.
Flexible programs and subgranting that are able to respond to individual CSO needs and unforeseen opportunities.	Rigid programs, such as the EU-Phare funds, with long lead-in time and cumbersome bureaucratic processing cannot respond to CSO initiatives or windows of opportunity.	Increases reach of subgrant programs, builds CSO sustainability, and maintains momentum for CSO development and the sector reform agenda.	Ensuring assistance program does not lose its focus.
Building long term relationships between U.S. and Romanian CSOs	Having a mentor and/or partner helps sustain CSOs in the formative years and builds sophisticated capacity in subsequent years.	Improved quality of CSO and its services and increased CSO involvement in the broader international community.	Sustaining the relationship over time once funding for joint activities/visits ends.

¹⁸ 2002 NGO Sustainability Index, Romania, p 132 2002.

3.4.3. Remaining questions on CSO development programs

SEED programs were unique in that they provided high levels of assistance over a long period of time to Eastern European countries undergoing a political, social and economic transition. These countries also started at a relatively higher level of development than some of USAID's partners in other areas, such as Africa or post-conflict zones. The CSO development programs in Romania were highly successful, but they raise some fundamental questions on civil society development programs that are beyond the scope of this Assessment and would require a multi-country/regional assessment to answer. These include:

- How much assistance is enough? At what point can donor assistance end and civil society development continue on its own? Romania received USAID assistance through its accession to the EU. This is a point of development that is far beyond the termination point for USAID programs in many countries, yet CSOs still raised concerns that USAID was pulling out too soon, as they believe Romania's transition is not yet assured.
- Is it more effective to focus on the support/creation of a few solid CSOs in each sector, or is it better to take a broader approach? USAID's initial focus was on the former, with almost all of its sector implementers creating or helping their own "babies." As the years passed, USAID increased its coverage and reach, which may be the natural evolution for these kinds of programs. Of note was the number of "Romanian" CSOs without a U.S. or European parent. These were created by small groups of active and concerned individuals that knew there was donor funding available for sector activities done through CSOs and went for it. Some of these organizations are now world-class.
- How can we keep the investment made by donors in CSOs in the sector, and indeed in the country? One of the issues in Romania was that CSO work is not seen as a career by many, primarily due to the low pay. Once a country's economy improves, many CSO leaders trained by donors move to the private sector or go abroad (which is increasingly the case in Romania since it joined the EU) while others go to work for international CSOs in other countries.

3.5. OVERARCHING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the fall of communism, civil society has seen an extraordinary rebirth in Romania, supported by a large and sustained influx of external donor funding and assistance. In the years since the revolution, civil society expanded dramatically. There are thousands of CSOs in Romania today, including many with a high degree of skill and professionalism. Although many CSOs are based in Bucharest, civil society is substantially decentralized. CSOs with national mandates and scopes are based in regional cities, such as the Advocacy Academy in Timisoara and the Association for Community Relations in Cluj. The Assessment team found its conclusions largely applied consistently across Romania, based on both field visits and responses to questionnaires.

3.5.1. Findings

CSOs made a strong impact on social service delivery, governance, democracy and economic development. CSOs in all three of these sectors play important roles in Romanian society. The service delivery organizations provide a substantial proportion of services in key areas, particularly with regards to health and welfare. Professional associations are important participants in Romania's economic life and offer valuable representation and services to many professionals and SMEs. The civic and democracy sector CSOs continue to help move Romanian democracy forward by acting as government watchdogs, providing citizens with valuable information and pushing for further transparency and democratization.

USAID's assistance provided an enabling environment and a set of democratic values that made a substantive difference in civil society development, its activities and impact. Examining USAID's impact by looking at CSOs that received support from USAID only captures a part of the overall impact

USAID had in Romania over the last 17 years. A perhaps more significant effect of USAID support in Romania, particularly in the civic and democracy sectors, has been its influence on the political environment. Several civil society representatives interviewed commented that something fundamental had changed in Romania--many people have a stronger sense of their rights and roles as citizens in a democratic and free society and believe that it is no longer possible to reverse directions with regard to democratization. They attribute this, at least in part, to USAID's support to CSOs.

Partnerships developed significantly from a mutual recognition of the benefits CSOs and the public sector bring to each other and from donor funding conditions, including USAID's. Relationships between CSOs and the state are complex, but have significant elements of cooperation in all three sectors. For example, the more powerful professional associations provide information to relevant government agencies which, in turn, include these associations in much of their decision-making. Social service oriented CSOs, in some areas, work as partners with local government agencies that are otherwise unable to deliver critically needed services. Even in the civic sector, where CSOs might often find themselves in conflict with the government, there are elements of partnership as CSOs and government work together on human rights, trafficking and other issues. Public officials have an increasingly positive image of CSOs as potential partners, as opposed to a form of opposition. These relationships are not yet fully institutionalized, however, and range from an absence of collaboration to genuine partnerships with shared responsibilities and pooled resources.

The social and economic environment within Romania is changing, creating a critical juncture for many CSOs. Accession to the EU, the departure of USAID and the accelerated pace of political and economic change in Romania are creating special challenges which affect USAID's three target sectors differently. The professional sector is the least affected, as many professional associations fund themselves largely through their strong membership base. Despite its strong organizational capacity and capable leadership, the civic sector is the most vulnerable. This is in part because they relied more heavily on USAID for their funding, as European and other funders have proven less willing to fund democratization-oriented civic activities and organizations. In addition, the civic sector was more firmly entrenched in opposition to the state in the initial years of the transition, making it more difficult to develop civic CSO-government relationships. Service providers, especially the larger ones, are in the best position to take advantage of alternative funding sources because a commitment remains to support the provision of some basic social services in Romania to vulnerable groups. Smaller service oriented CSOs, however, will have more difficulties, as many do not have sufficient capacity to compete with the public and private sectors.

CSOs with a vision of their purpose are better prepared for the changing environment. CSOs tended to fall into two categories--those that sought projects and spoke of their activities in terms of these projects, and those with a long-term vision that saw their activities as programs. Those with a vision were found to be more focused, professional and more likely to be sustainable after the departure of their primary donors. They found funding to help them implement their program and some have worked on being financially independent of donors since their inception. Examples can be seen in every sector. For instance, in the civic sector ACCEPT engaged in a number of high-profile advocacy campaigns supported through USAID programs that were consistent with its vision, mission, and values. Thus, USAID was able to, in the words of an ACCEPT representative, "provide training based on our requests defined by our mission." The Association for Community Relations in Cluj discussed its long-term plans for sustainability within the context of an organizational vision for the next ten years. In the professional sector, ARC, ANAMOB and others in the food sector relied heavily on membership dues for their core funding and only sought outside funding for specific projects. This approach was taken early in the lives of these organizations and have substantially reduced their dependency on international donors.

Good models transferred through USAID assistance are still making a significant difference today. USAID assistance created model CSOs and model services and reforms in every sector. It also provided organizational and sustainability models that are in use throughout the CSO and associational sectors. For example, in the civic sector, the Pro-Democracy Association, Resource Center for Public Policy and

CENTRAS are results of USAID assistance and continue to set the standard for civic CSOs, which have multiplied through example. In the professional sector, numerous professional and business associations draw heavily on American models and expertise and have made a strong impact in their respective economic areas. In the social sector, all services in child welfare reforms and family planning were piloted by CSOs-- fundamentally changing the standard of care and prevention in Romania.

Sustained assistance, interaction and mentoring provided an environment that enabled CSOs to develop new attitudes and become effective agents of change. New attitudes and ways of approaching problems learned through USAID programs will remain and continue to create ripple effects throughout the country, even if some CSOs cease operations. For example, in the civic sector, APADOR-CH, one of USAID's first subgrantees, recently used an RSCC subgrant to undertake nationwide monitoring of Law 52/2003 (Sunshine Law on Transparency in Governing). It coordinated the activities of 14 CSOs in monitoring and is establishing an advocacy campaign for more transparency in local government decision-making. As another example, USAID moral support and expertise changed the approaches of CSOs in the health sector, including SECS, PSI, Youth for Youth and ARAS, and empowered them to become strong and active advocates for better standards, services and reform.

Alternative sources of income for CSOs are available. USAID made efforts to address this problem, most recently through its RCSS program. This program included support to the United Way to work with Romanian businesses to encourage corporate and individual donations of time and money to support CSOs. This program has begun to reach a few companies and their employees, but it will take time before an impact is felt more broadly in Romanian civil society. In Romania, corporate philanthropy remains under-developed. Almost two-thirds of businesses do not contribute to charitable giving, and those that do tend to give evenly to CSOs, schools and kindergartens, the church, and other institutions (e.g., medical institutions).¹⁹

The Fiscal Code adopted in 2004 allows individual taxpayers to donate 2 percent of their tax income to an eligible non-profit organization. Reviewing results from the first two years of the law's implementation, this law demonstrates a strong funding potential for Romanian organizations. From 2005 to 2006, the amount of giving under the new law doubled, both in terms of amount donated to nonprofit organizations and the number of taxpayers who donated. In total, since 2004, the new law has raised more than €5 million and has involved 8.6 percent of all taxpayers.²⁰ While at this point the average funding amount that each organization receives remains insignificant, the law provides a genuine potential for developing local philanthropy.

Although many CSOs are still dependent on grants and donations, there are notable initiatives towards self-financing. A recent study²¹ estimates the average self-financing income generated by Romanian CSOs is between 10.2 percent and 16 percent of their budget. As social economy will be supported by the EU Structural Funds through the Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources, the prospects for further development of social enterprises are very good.

¹⁹ Association for Community Relations, <http://www.arcromania.ro/mambo/>

²⁰ Report on the Situation of Direct Governmental Financing for CSOs in Romania, Civil Society Development Foundation, 2007

²¹ NESsT- Social Enterprise in Romania, An analysis of the state of self-financing among civil society organizations in Romania, 2007

3.5.2. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Best Practice	Lessons Learned	Impact	Challenges
Develop agents of change in key areas to promote reform.	Sustained assistance and interaction provides an environment that enable CSOs to change their way of thinking and ability to become effective agents of change.	Sector reforms and ripple effect of new attitudes and ways of approaching problems- even after donor assistance ends and/or if an CSO ceases operations.	Keeping CSO change agents in the sector, especially when the salaries are low.
Introduction of appropriate models and standards of practice.	American models can transfer well through CSO pilot projects and sustained interaction with U.S. implementers and experts.	Increased efficiency in operations and the provision of higher quality services. Associations adopting models became member focused and sustained by member support.	Entrenched bureaucratic attitudes and vested interests in status quo.
Assist CSOs to develop an organizational vision and undertake long term strategic planning.	CSOs with a programmatic vision are able to find funding to pursue their vision while project-based CSO struggle after donors leave.	CSOs with a program (vision) and their key staff will still be active in the sector long after donors leave.	Developing a vision in a scarce funding environment will be difficult for many of the CSOs used to working on the basis of (donor-funded) projects.
Investment in CSO leaders as well as in CSOs.	Human capital investments, such as intensive trainings and study tours, have value-added since it increases the likelihood that when individuals leave their CSO, they will remain active in their sector.	The value-added impact of human capital investment has generated leaders in all sectors and more breadth of coverage	Keeping effective leaders and trained staff in CSOs with its low salaries and uncertain funding

3.5.3. Conclusions

USAID's impact on civil society in Romania has been broad and positive. USAID was seen by CSOs as flexible and able to respond to political and social developments. This in turn enabled partners to respond to these developments. USAID was seen as a partner, not simply as source of financial support.

Since Romania started its negotiations with the EU and with its accession in 2007, the traditional international donors have gradually withdrawn, but new sources, such as the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and Black Sea Trust, are opening up with a different vision and approach. In addition, pre-accession funding programs are being replaced by structural funds that do not have the development of civil society as a priority. Even in areas where CSOs are eligible, their role is perceived as providers of consultancy or training rather than as monitors, advocates, representatives or social service deliverers. Under these circumstances, most CSOs perceive their future as challenging and are anticipating having to diversify their activities. One consequence could be a change in the missions of some CSOs in order to adapt to new conditions.

Virtually all areas of life in Romania have changed dramatically since the revolution of 1989, and civil society is no exception. As USAID prepares to leave Romania, there are some remaining issues and questions that are worth keeping in mind. The strong emphasis placed on service delivery oriented CSOs by USAID and other donors raises questions for the future of the Romanian state and civil society. There was an urgent need for these organizations in the early 1990s, as the state could not provide many basic services to children, the disabled or the needy. Internationally supported CSOs began to fill this need and evolved into a key part of

Romania's social support system. However, this role is already being reduced as the Romanian state continues to strengthen itself.

In many countries, particularly in Europe, these types of services are provided either by the state or by internally supported CSOs. The relationship between the state and the service delivery oriented CSOs is complex. It is characterized by fruitful cooperation, competition, distrust and support, depending on the location and service in question. It will take some time for these issues to be resolved and for Romanians to determine what approach to service delivery works best for them. Thus, if the social service CSO sector shrinks in the next 5-10 years, this should not necessarily be interpreted as a weakening of civil society in Romania.

Similarly, CSOs in other sectors are evolving as well, notably in the civic sector. As mentioned, civic CSOs will suffer the most immediate effects of USAID departure because, according to these CSOs, USAID proved to be a uniquely important funder of that sector. Some of these organizations intend to move towards selling their skills and services to other organizations that need assistance in capacity building, proposal writing, advocacy or other areas. Several organizations offering support to SMEs, notably the Center for Excellence in Business, will also probably begin selling their services after USAID leaves. This is in many respects a positive development as organizations pursue constructive approaches to remaining viable after the departure of their primary funders. However, it represents a departure of more traditional approaches to the functions and economic contexts for most CSOs. It is likely that some of these CSOs will become hybrids of CSOs and businesses.

USAID's departure will, at least in the short run, clearly create a gap in the funding for some elements of Romanian civil society. The efforts of CSOs to find new donors and to adapt to the new funding environment will be important, but are only part of the story. Another piece of the story is the question of whether a culture of philanthropy and support for civil society will emerge among businesses in Romania and among members of the country's growing middle class.

Efforts to cultivate a culture of philanthropy in the Romanian private sector and to expand this philanthropy beyond traditional charities could have helped Romanian CSOs who now must turn to these sources for money. Grant writing skills, CSO capacity building and the like will have limited impact in a place where wealthy people are not aware that they could or should support civil society.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that the goal of U.S. assistance is not to build CSOs for their own sake but to support CSO development because these organizations represent an integral part of civil society more broadly. This is an additional reason why a reduction in the number of Romanian CSOs following the departure of USAID should not be interpreted as a weakening of Romanian civil society or a failure on the part of USAID and other donors. Romanian civil society is still in a period of transition, but transition of a different kind. The next few years will see the further institutionalization of the mores and habits of a democratic civil society as more people begin to hold the values and views associated with CSOs. Perhaps counterintuitively, this may mean a reduced need for CSOs as these values will become ingrained into the society more broadly.

ATTACHMENT I: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

1. SAMPLE RESONSES FROM RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES

1. On the most beneficial types of assistance.

Institutional development of the organization. - *CSO Bucharest*

Successful introduction of the Engage model for approaching community development. Our introduction to this model has been a successful blend of formal training, on the job training and study visits. We still use it today. - *CSO Cluj-Napoca*.

The CHF-USAID program was designed according to the real needs of business and in close cooperation with business associations. - *CSO Bucharest*

World Learning Romanian team and their technical assistance. WL team shifted our perspective on donors. For the first time, the technical assistance team of a donor really fulfilled its mission: to assist the NGOs. The WL tools on self evaluation of the NGOs helped us on a wider range of issues, not only the project. - *CSO Oradea*

On writing projects and management of a project. - *CSO Slobozia*

2. On CSO constraints.

Our staff needs better financial skills in order to manage its resources and have access to a more diverse type of funding. Our financial resources are generated in vast proportion through grant proposals, a situation which creates uncertainty and funding opportunity dependency. This in turn leads to a non-continuous organizational activity. - *CSO Cluj-Napoca*

Impossibility to build partnerships on the long term with public authorities, which often don't agree and support these partnerships. - *Arad CSO*

The lack of real support for NGOs from public authorities and politicians. NGOs will still have to struggle for survival in the next years in these conditions. - *CSO Oradea*

3. On CSO federations.

We were members of ProChild Federation. Those meetings were useful as USAID (implementers) attended the meetings and thought it was useful to find out information, legislative changes, to get more contacts in the field of work and to get better representation. All of the above worked. Since the two federations merged last year nothing happened. - *CSO Bucharest*

Federations come to adopt the behavior of so called supra- organizations neglecting their members' interests; they attract projects whose resources are used mainly for financing the federation itself. - *CSO Bucharest*

4. On the changes in the NGO sector in the past decade.

Positive changes in legislation, organizational management, financial management, working approaches, staff policy, professionalism of work, attitude towards community and reverse. Thanks to all of these we grow healthy and in dignity. - *CSO Bucharest*

NGOs took the initiative of developing new services in the community which afterwards were taken over by public services and were acknowledged as models of good practice. At first, the financing granted to nongovernmental organizations was almost exclusively external, at the moment, non-government organizations also benefit of government funds being noticed more by government in the development of the civil service.

- *CSO Iasi*

The networking activity was important. Several programs like Child Net were very important to developing and strengthening the NGO sector. We have kept pace with this development and benefited of all opportunities for funding projects in the field of social assistance for children at risk.

In the 90s, NGOs in the social sector developed specialized services for various segments of population in need and collaborated with each other based on a wide openness and transparency. Afterwards they grew in quality but the scarcity of funds generated a keener competition, amongst them. In the meantime, we face a harmful fluctuation of personnel as more and more social assistance move to other areas of activity because of the low salaries. - *CSO Bucharest*

NGO sector has become increasingly dynamic and effective. - *CSO Bucharest*

The NGOs became more professional and many times they offer services better in quality than those provided by similar services provided by the government. But unfortunately, NGOs still work in parallel with government instead of collaborating with them. - *CSO Bistrita*

The NGO sector has developed just like the Romanian society, meaning it is polarized. On the developed NGOs pole we may find the strong organizations, most of them international organizations or supported by political parties or cults, organizations which are less interested in the sector's development. At the other pole there are more and more NGOs fighting for survival and, generally they are working in the social field. The main cause is the lack of unity of the NGO sector, which leads to a reduced capacity of pressuring the political factor. - *CSO Alba*

The change is radical. In 10 years, the NGOs and the professional associations became a representative force of the civil society, which have something to say in all fields of the socio-economic life in Romania.

- *CSO Bucharest*

5. On CSO-government relationships.

There still are a lot of things to be done for a real efficient public-private partnership, we are only at the beginning of this type of collaboration. Many times, this partnership is imposed by the financier, which is a positive fact, but in many cases it remains a formal partnership. - *CSO Bucharest*

The biggest change is the attitude of the public administration towards working in public-private partnership and basic development (we have training and partnership development with 175 local councils, city halls, school inspectorates and police inspectorates, public institutions, schools, companies, NGOs, etc.)

- *CSO Alba*

6. On their major concerns for the future.

Limitation of external financing, the insufficient involvement of the government in financially supporting non-governmental organizations, and the lack of corporate social responsibility. - *CSO Iasi*

The law concerning concession of services by the state to NGOs. This law is, in its current form, against the interest of NGOs. While there is no actual support from the state, NGOs are required to carry out the most difficult problems that the state is not capable to solve yet. - *CSO Bucharest*

Organizations have to reshape their interests according to the available funding opportunities which lead to not very clearly defined organizational missions and objectives. - *CSO Cluj-Napoca*.

Our main worry is in connection with the authorities. They do not really take into account the NGOs opinions. There is a lot of work to be done on this chapter, it is useless to discuss only among ourselves about the legislative changes which are necessary for supporting the NGO sector. E.g. it is not normal that in 2007 for the Phare program Economic and Social Cohesion – The Scheme of Social Services, only the public structures applicants were considered eligible. What else can we say about services subcontracted to the NGOs if state services creation continues to receive the funds? - *CSO Bucharest*

We are confronted with the challenge of finding dedicated individuals who are willing to put in personal efforts and allocate time for specific activities. There is also a need for changing personnel at the level of our organization as many of our members have now complex responsibilities (jobs, families, etc) and they find less time to allocate to us. - *CSO Cluj-Napoca*.

Our main concern is the one related to the difficulty of identifying financial sources to help us continue our activity. - *CSO Bacau*

7. On being able to raise funds within Romania.

It covers less than 5 percent because the real rich people don't give, they only use NGOs as front-line to cover businesses. (referring to cronyism between city hall and award of NGO contracts). - *CSO Bucharest*

The 2 percent law now in force has not brought many positive changes for this type of smaller NGOs as they do not have the same potential to advertise and campaign as larger organizations have. - *CSO Cluj-Napoca*

We supply social services and have no fiscal facility. We are paying the same taxes as the private companies. - *CSO Alba*

The local funding from private donors is still at a low level due to a lack of social awareness and social involvement. The funding from European funds is not yet established and harder to access by small organizations. - *CSO Bucharest*

Because we work on environment protection, economy, agriculture, research and the private companies are not willing to sponsor these kinds of activities. They mainly support the children and elderly concerned activities. - *CSO Neamt*

2. PROFILE OF CSOs THAT RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES

Recipient of external assistance: 89 percent

Locations: Bucharest: 61 percent. Other: 39 percent, specifically: Alba, Arad, Bacau, Bistrita, Braila, Cluj-Napoca, Dolj, Iasi, Neamt, Olt, Oradea, Pitesti and Slobozia

Dates of establishment: Between 1951 and 2003. 2 percent created before 1990; 48 percent created between 1990 - 1995, 25 percent between 1996-2000, and 25 percent between 2000-2003.

Annual budgets: From \$2,000 to \$650,000. Average size budget: \$125,000

Number of Offices: 1 – 16. Average number of offices: 2.5

Members of a federation: 65 percent

USAID recipients: 57 percent

Percent of funding from Romanian sources: 0 – 70 percent. Average: 20 percent.

Number of questionnaires returned: 28

ATTACHMENT 2: INTERVIEW QUOTES

On building civil society organizations

I suppose it is a question of trust. It comes from the old era of forced collectivization. (on difficulties in association building) - *Professional association*

We need more NGOs in our county. - *County government official*

Watchdog groups did not really become visible in Romania until after 2000. But now we have recognition from public administration and the media for what we do. - *Civic CSO*

Most important step was when people began to organize themselves for influencing public policy. - *CSO leader*

This is a tough environment for CSOs. Cooperation and trust are missing, especially in the business environment. - *USAID implementer*

There's been a huge problem since 2003 keeping people in the sector. They move abroad or to the private sector. - *CSO support organization.*

I am not optimistic for the sector. - *CSO support organization*

"The beast" is alive and will survive. There is enough capacity in civil society that it can never go back. They will figure out how to become sustainable. - *Former implementer*

We got our accreditation as a training body in July by the Ministry of Labor, so now we can train for a fee. There is a market for training. We are in a good position, we have good relations and we understand that professionalism is important. We've expanded to the Republic of Moldova- they also need training. UNDP Moldova hired us to evaluate training needs. - *Social service CSO*

On CSO-government relations

Mayors have become more open to civil society; and civil society has become more influential. - *Longtime US implementer*

Partnerships are working. If NGOs need help, the county will help them out. - *Journalist*

The government is not very interested in CSOs now. - *Social service Federation*

The prefecture was the first state institution that came to us to ask us to be partners and to see how they could help. Usually we had to go to them and do a lot of the work. - *Women's CSO*

[We had] success as long as we had money to offer; yet local government sees NGOs as givers, what can you offer? The most difficult challenge is to transform the perceptions of local governments to see us as receivers not givers. - *Social sector CSO*

We have more experience in state institutions now working with NGOs, so it is easier to work with them and approach them. - *Crime prevention police officer*

The key issue is how NGOs collaborate with each other. - *Government official*

On USAID's assistance to develop CSOs

Participating in the USAID institutional development programs we had for the first time a clear idea about not only how to survive, but also how to develop our organization. - *Civic CSO*

This was a golden egg. (referring to a USAID startup grant). - *CSO leader*

We owe our very existence and support in the first few years to USAID programs. - *Professional association*

What happened to GRASP? - *CSO Iasi*

If we would have gotten more assistance, the transition would have been faster. - *Civic CSO on decision to cut DemNet subgrant program.*

We don't have a plan for future funding. - *Civic CSO*

We are an NDI baby, but we liked IRI too. - *Civic CSO*

Assistance helped us to build our capacity to bring in money. It was hard at first, but it's easier now. - *Social sector CSO*

We were jealous of international babies (CSOs) as they were children of wealthy parents. They got money with no effort, and we were poor. But we worked hard and are even now. - *Romanian-born CSO*

USAID played a leadership role. Now there will be a leadership void. - *Health sector CSO*

American experience is still needed, especially in the field of public participation and the development of local administration. - *International Foundation*

USAID provided the opportunity for us to change our way of thinking and to become real agents of change. We are USAID's legacy. No one will change our mindset even if the NGO fails. - *Health sector CSO*

We got so comfortable after so many years (referring to USAID support). - *Long-time USAID CSO partner.*

This USAID program on consolidating the community initiatives on HIV/AIDS and domestic violence prevention represents a model and set a trend in the Romanian Orthodox Church: from now on, we can intervene and work on topics that the Church considers taboo. - *Social CSO*

[USAID assistance] supported our efforts to change the issue [of HIV/AIDS] from one of health to a human rights issue. - *Civic CSO*

USAID's legacy in Romania is represented by a culture of working in NGOs and with NGOs. - *International Foundation*

No one could have done more to facilitate our relationship with government. USAID and JSI did a great job but with them leaving, we will lose our position and won't be as strong to advocate for and participate in future health strategy development. - *Long-time CSO health partner.*

USAID programs emphasize personal relationships [with implementers] and investment in human capital. These are free benefits that continually pay off. - *Civic CSO*

AID gave us a different approach-- in an AID project everyone is interested in doing something good, something that will last. - *Social sector CSO and former implementer*

World Learning has a flexible, rapid response. They are approachable and could amend the contract easily.
- *Social sector CSO*

Lessons Learned

NGO assistance works better when grants are complimented by technical assistance such as consulting and training for NGOs. - *Civic CSO*

Advocacy training never stops. - *International donor*

Including key government people in CSO study tours and training so they can serve as agents of change. Linking study tours with practical exercises showed that neither side could go it alone in setting up social services. - *Child welfare CSO*

Context is important, as is knowing which association to strengthen. - *Implementer*

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The Assessment was undertaken in September and October of 2007. It was composed in three parts: 1) desk review; 2) field work in Romania including interviews, site visits, focus groups and administration of a questionnaire; and 3) analysis of the information and writing of the report.

The Assessment Team was composed of three U.S. and three Romanian experts in the field of Romanian civil society and development assistance: Sue Nelson, Dr. Paul Sum, Dr. Lincoln Mitchell, Alexandra-Luminita Petrescu, Oana Lupu, and Suzana Dobre.

The Assessment focused on CSOs working in USAID's three priority sub-sectors of 1) civic/policy, 2) service delivery and 3) professional and both USAID recipients and non-recipients were interviewed. The Team examined the status of each sub-sector before USAID engagement, identified changes within the sub-sector, evaluated the impact of USAID assistance on each and identified remaining gaps, best practices and lessons learned.

Desk Review: This included a review of literature on Romanian civil society and available program documents. It covered the status of civil society in Romania before USAID involvement and examined USAID-funded assistance programs to the civil society sector in Romania since 1990. This review familiarized the Team with USAID programs and objectives and allowed the initial prioritization of organizations, individuals, and regions to visit during its field work.

Field Work: The Team spent three weeks in Romania conducting the field work. In consultation with USAID/Romania, the list of persons and organizations to interview were finalized along with the determination of the regional sites to visit. After initial briefings, the Team divided into three sub-teams composed of one American and one Romanian that each covered one of USAID's three priority sub-sectors.

After the first week of interviews in Bucharest, the sub-teams were reconstituted to form (cross-sector) regional teams that traveled to and conducted interviews in Cluj, Dej, Iasi, Timisoara, Bocsia and Vaslui. The objective was to ensure the Team obtained a balanced view of civil society development and USAID's assistance across Romania and in both urban and rural areas.

The final week was spent in Bucharest completing the national-level interviews and debriefing USAID. Among those interviewed: USAID, USAID implementers and partners, other donors, civil society organizations and activists, local and national government, and others with knowledge of or insight into civil society in Romania. The complete list of persons contacted is detailed in Appendix 3.

Most interviews were conducted directly with the individual and/or organization. But in addition, the Team held a series of sector-specific focus group discussions in Bucharest, Cluj and Vaslui. In addition, a short questionnaire was developed and circulated to CSOs across the country to ensure that the Team had a broad-range of input from CSOs across Romania. Responses received included CSOs in Alba, Arad, Bacau, Bistrita, Braila, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Dolj, Iasi, Neamt, Olt, Oradea, Pietesti and Slobozia, established between 1951 and 2003 and with annual budgets ranging from \$2,000 to \$650,000.

Analysis of Information and Report Writing: The Team focused its analysis and report writing at the macro-level, looking at four overarching questions. Specifically:

- What was the status of CSOs in each sub-sector prior to USG assistance?
- What assistance did the USG provide?
- How has the sub-sector improved with USG assistance?
- What are the remaining gaps?

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In addition, in developing best practices and lessons learned, the Assessment was asked to consider the following points:

- What were the major successes of each program and how did these come about and contribute to the development of civil society?
- What were the shortcomings of each program and what improvements could have contributed to better results?
- How did beneficiaries/CSOs/Government of Romania perceive the programs?
- Are the programs sustainable and why or why not?

APPENDIX B: PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, Bucharest
Obie Moore, Board Member

Advocacy Academy, Timisoara
Radu Nicosevici, President
Corina Dragomirescu, Senior Consultant

ACCEPT/Center for Legal Resources, Bucharest
Florin Buhuceanu, President

AID ONG, Timisoara
Mihai Lisetchi, Director

ALDO-CET, Dolj County
Questionnaire²²

Alaturi de Voi Foundation, Iasi
Questionnaire

AMPRF (Asociatia Mutuala de Prietenie Romania), Cluj Napoca
Atila Fuleke

Antena 1, Studioul Iasi
Angela Enache, Reporter

APADOR CH (Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Romania-Helsinki Committee), Bucharest
Diana Hatneanu (Calinescu), Executive Director

APEV (Association of Wine Exporters and Producers of Romania)
Ioan Stefan, Executive Director

ASIS, Asociatia pentru Sprijinirea Integrarii Sociale, Bucharest
Questionnaire

Asociatia Alternative Sociale
Alexandru Gulei, Project Coordinator
Catalin Luca, Director

²² CSOs that self-identified on returned questionnaires are included in this list. Most returned questionnaires were anonymous.

Asociatia Comunelor din Romania

Sergiu Tara, Executive Director
Emil Draghici, President

Asociatia de Sprijin a Copiilor Handicapati Fizic- Romania

Elena Oncia, Program Coordinator

Asociatia Europea

Alexandru Mita

Asociatia Expertilor de Mediu, Bucharest

Florin Mircea Vasiliu, Vice President
Ana Maria Cadariu, General Manager

Asociatia Mina si Acoperamantul Domnului, Vaslui

Anca Marcas

Asociatia Nationala de Turism Rural, Ecologic si Cultural (ANTREC)

Maria Stoian, President

Asociatia Patronala a IMM din judetul Vaslui

Ovidiu Copacinschi, Director

Asociatia Pentru Copiii Nostri, Bucharest

Ion Predescu, Executive Director

Asociatia Romana a Carnii

Mihai Visan, Executive Director

Asociatia Sprijiniți Copiii, Alba

Questionnaire

Association for Community Relations, Cluj Napoca

Alina Porumb

Bethany Foundation Romania

Irina Braharu, Director, Iasi
Diana Cristea, National Director

Casa de Ajutor Reciproc a Pensionarilor “Omenia”, Bucharest

Questionnaire

Chambers of Commerce

Elisabeta Dumitrescu, Director Department of International Relations, Cluj-Napoca
Menuta Iovescu, General Secretary, Timisoara
Rodica Olinic, PR Counselor, Timisoara
Emil Mateescu, Counselor Timisoara
Adrian Costea, Managing Director, Vaslui

Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development (CEED)

Cristina Manescu, Executive Director

Center for Excellency in Business

Cezar Scarlet, Director

Center for International Private Enterprise, (CIPE) Bucharest

Camelia Bulat

CENTRAS, Bucharest

Viorel Micescu, Executive Director

Centrul de zi pentru copii, Bocsă

Sanda Korom, Director

Centrul de Recuperare a Copiilor cu Handicap Motor, Cluj-Napoca

Ioana Boca

Centrul de Resurse pentru Comunitatile de Romi, Cluj Napoca

Claudia Macaria

Centrul de Resurse pentru Participare Publica (Ce-Re), Bucharest

Oana Preda, Program Director

Centrul de Resurse si Informare pentru Profesii Sociale (CRIPS)

Mirela Turcu

Questionnaire

Centrul de zi pentru batrani, Vaslui

Doru Sepenius, Director

Centrul pentru Integritate Sociala si Politici Antidiscriminatorii, Vaslui

Viorel-Julian Vlad

Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent (CJI), Bucharest

Mihaela Danga, Deputy Executive Director

CIVITAS, Cluj Napoca

Marton Balogh

Cooperativa Agricola de Achizitii si Servicii 2007 Moldova, Iasi

Mihai Wolf

Elpis Foundation, Dej

Vasile Pop, President

Express Finance, Timisoara

Dan Orodan, Deputy General Manager

Federatia Organizatiilor Nationale pentru Protectia Copilului, Bucharest

Bogdan Simion, President

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Federatia Patronatelor din Turism

Dragos Raducan

Fix Media Production, Iasi

Gabriela Gruia

Fundatia Copiii Nostri, Bucharest

Questionnaire

Fundatia Estuar, Bucharest

Cristin Poplauchi, Executive Director

Ameda Enache, Economic Director

Fundatia Motivation Romania

Elena Filip, Executive Director

Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile (FDSC), Bucharest

Ionut Sibian, Executive Director

Fundatia Pro Probatiune, Dej

Adrian Tanase

GRADO (Romanian Group for the Defense of Human Rights Center), Bucharest

Rodica Nita, Vice President

Hospice Casa Sperantei, Brasov, Bucharest

Malina Dumitrescu

Magda Muntean, Program Coordinator

Institutul National de Geriatrie si Gerontologie "Ana Aslan"

Dr. Gabriel-Ioan Prada, Medical Director

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Carmen Botez, Secretary General

National League of Owners Association HABITAT ROMANIA Timisoara

Petre Olariu, PrimeVice President

Omenia Foundation, Neamt

Questionnaire

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Questionnaire

PAEM Arad Association, Arad

Questionnaire

Parudimov Association, Timisoara
Leonard Bebi, Director

Patriarhia Romana, Bucharest
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Pentru Fiecare Copil o Familie
Maria Volintiru, Executive Director

Pentru Voi, Timisoara
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Prison Fellowship Foundation
Magda Lazar

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Cristina Nicolescu

Population Services International Romania
Dragos Gavrilescu, Deputy Director Programs

Pro Democracy
Ana Maria Mosneagu, Executive Director, Bucharest
Victor Cioara, Pro Democracy Cluj
Andrei Dehelenu, Pro Democracy Timisoara
Georgeta Condur, Pro Democracy Iasi

Pro Women, Iasi
Irina Barbalata, Executive President

Public Policy Institute (IPP)
Violeta Alexandru, Executive Director

Ramses Foundation, Dej
Adrian Moldovan

RFNC (Regional Facilitation and Negotiation Center), Iasi
Diana Mosneagu, Program Director

Romanian Anti-AIDS Association (ARAS)
Galina Musat, Project Coordinator
Liana Velica, Project Coordinator

Romanian Cancer Society, Cluj Napoca
Marlene Farcas, Executive Director

Romani Criss, Bucharest
Magda Matache, President

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Romanian National Association of Flour Milling and Baking Industries (ANAMOB)
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Romanian Independent Society of Human Rights (SIRDO)
Lucia Humeniuc, Co-President

Salvati Copiii
Miralena Mamina, Program Coordinator Bucharest
Mihai Gafencu, Executive Director, Timisoara Branch

SCOP, Timisoara
Lucia Berneantu, Social Assistant
Claudia Feher, Psychologist
Speranta Hedcal, Executive Director
Iogosz Laszlo, Psychologist

SERA, Bucharest
Daniela Abrudan

Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality (SECS), Bucharest
Borbala Koo, Executive Director

Special Olympics of Romania, Bucharest
Questionnaire

Tech 21
Valerica Dragomir, Executive Director

Transylvania Conservation Volunteers (CET) Cluj Napoca
Gabriel Parauan
Questionnaire

United Way, Bucharest
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Ioan Macovei, Head of Department, District Police, Vaslui
Doru Sepeniuc, Director, Public Social Services Department, Vaslui
Margareta Hochin, Roma Counselor, Prefecture, Iasi

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CHF International
Mazen Fawzy, Country Director
Brian King, Program Manager

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Laura Stefan, former Juridical Counselor, GRASP Project

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
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International Orthodox Christian Charities
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Merce Gasco, Country Director, Romanian Family Health Initiative

National Democratic Institute (NDI)
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PADCO
Scott Johnson, Chief of Party, Local Government Support Project

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