

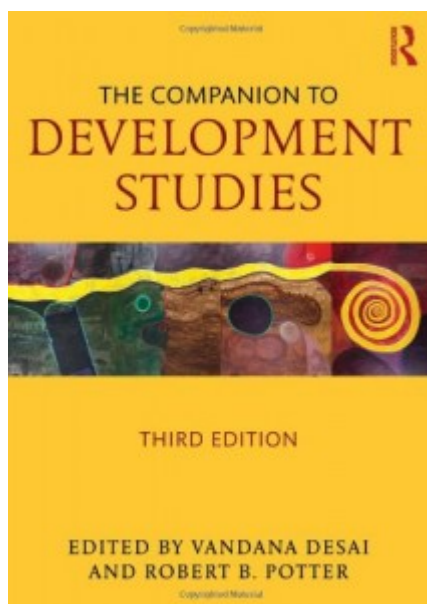
# ARCADIA's recommended reads

International development is a continuous developing field itself. In order to keep on being updated with the latest interesting projects, the most inspirational texts, the newest approaches in the field, we are going to jot down a handy compilation of recent books published on connected topics, from poverty reduction, gender and health issues, to freedom and democracy related topics.

Are you looking for some provocative analysis of the current international development rhetoric, new discussions about the post-development era and both the benefits and pitfalls of the humanitarian aid?

If so, the cross-disciplinary field of international development is full of thought-provoking examples that prove that we all live in a web of interconnected local, regional and global debates.

Browse ARCADIA's latest recommendations below and feel invited to review the readings and suggest us new titles as well.

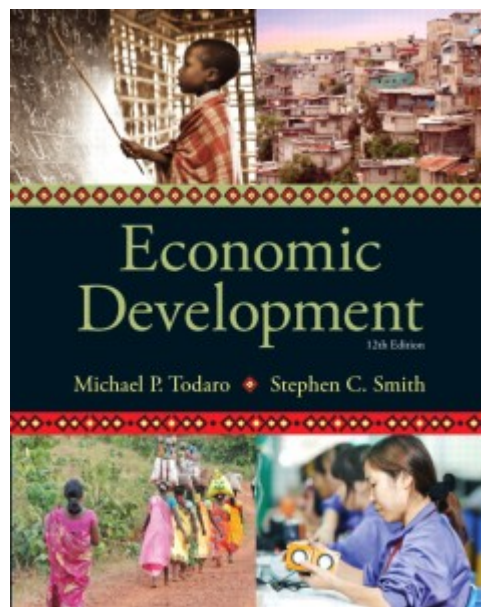


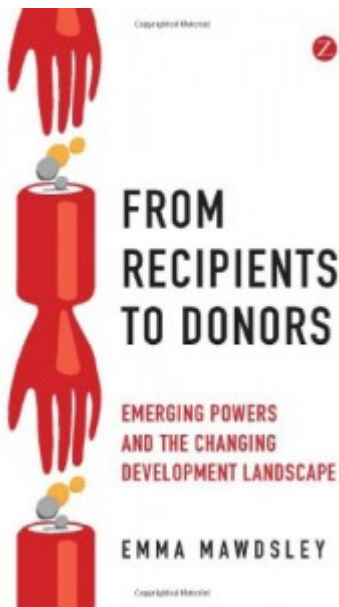
1) [\*The Companion to Development Studies\*](#), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter (eds.), Routledge, London, 2014

*The Companion to Development Studies*, written by leading international experts from several institutes and organizations, seeks to concisely bring together pressing contemporary issues in the field, including transnationality, migration, urbanism, gender related rights, terrorism, aid conditionality and many others. An introductory must reading for all those who want to become familiar with both theoretical and practical issues dominating the discipline, the book is without any doubts a gateway to further readings and experiences in the field of international development.

2) [\*Economic Development\*](#), 12<sup>th</sup> edition, Michael Todaro, Stephen C. Smith, Pearson, 2014

Already a leading textbook among students, scholars and practitioners, the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of *Economic Development* by Michael Todaro and Stephen C. Smith presents update economic theories in the context of contemporary policy debates and comes up with numerous country-specific case studies which show how theory connects to practice and vice versa. Therefore, authors try to offer a balanced full coverage of different points of view on major policies with a focus on new and critical topics such as rural-urban migration, fertility and demography, gender gap in education, rain forest destruction, etc. The lecture of this *Economic development* fosters our critical thinking and analytical capabilities on issues that go from problems encountered by Kenyan women farmers in their villages to neglected tropical diseases and the phenomena of brain drain.

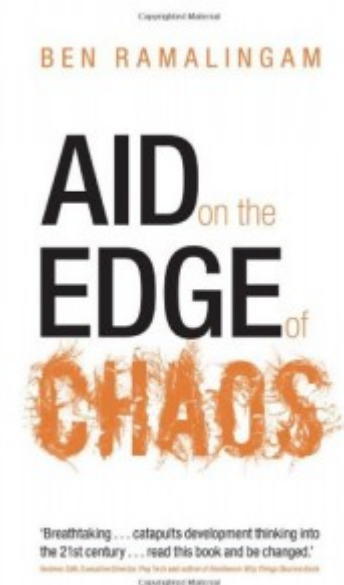




3) [From Recipients to Donors: Emerging powers and the changing development landscape](#), Emma Mawdsley, Zad Books, London and New-York, 2012

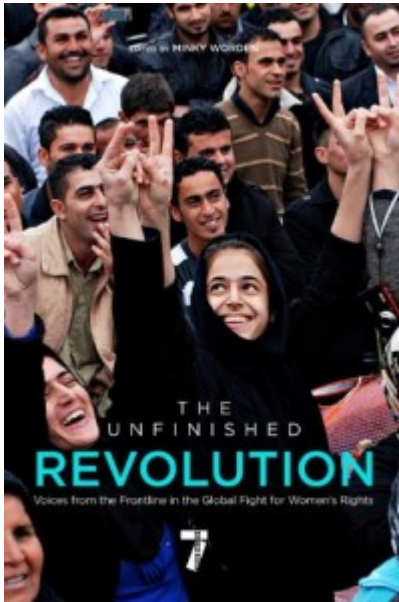
Emma Mawdsley tries to address a critical question that is at the core of many debates in the field of international development, a question related to the real incentives and reasons behind the official development aid (ODA). Thus, *what are specific actors in the field and at home trying to achieve and how do they understand and interpret development?*

In addition to this, the changing aid-related architecture driven by old recipients and nowadays new donors, the difficulties of interpreting the benefits brought by international aid in the field, the new shifts produced in the aid paradigm are all addressed in this book in a very multidisciplinary approach backed up by several country-specific examples.



4) [Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World](#), Ben Ramalingam, OUP Oxford, 2013

The book presents a much needed condensed analysis of international development aid in the context of globalization and various emerging needs, problems, actors and interests. It addresses not only the pitfalls of aid usually highly criticized for being uneven, disproportionate, politicized, undemocratic, the narratives wowed by aid agencies, their policies and high or not so high priorities, but it is providing inspiring examples of how complexity theories can be meaningfully put into practice.



5) [The Unfinished revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Right](#), Minky Worden, The Policy Press, 2012

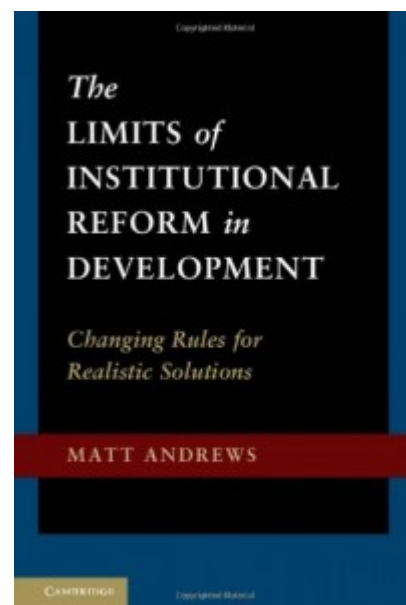
Edited by Minky Worden, the director of Global Initiatives for *Human Rights Watch*, the book is a valuable collection of narratives of world's most important advocates for women and girls rights. Former Nobel Laureate, Jody Williams, former Irish president Mary Robinson, together with other scholars, Human Rights activists and policy makers tried to map the state of women and girls in the world and come up with effective solutions for those exposed daily to domestic violence, abuses of human rights, unequal treatment, and other injustices. By offering a vivid image of this unequal gender-based world the volume tries to show the world the revolution that women and girls are fighting on daily basis in their lives, an *unfinished revolution* that none of us should ever give up.

6) [Flip-Flop: A Journey Through Globalisation's Backroads](#), Karoline Knowles, Pluto Press, 2014

How many of us have known that flip-flops represent the highest selling shoe in the world and help thousands of people from being barefoot?

Sociologist Karoline Knowles from University of London follows

a pair of flip-flops all over the world to discover a story about interconnectedness, migration, precarious work conditions from China to Egypt and Somaliland. If you get inspired by her meaningful research and have some questions to ask, then have a look on [her website](#) as well.



7) [The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions](#), Matt Andrews, Cambridge University Press, 2013

Institutional reforms are considered by all development players, such as the World Bank and other multilateral or bilateral agencies, a trigger to insert democratic rules and stability in developing countries. The latter usually try to adopt several institutional measures in order to strengthen their governance capabilities and improve their government. However, despite countless trial-and-error efforts, statistics and several evidences around the world show that reforms remain meaningless in many cases.

This volume tries to answer *why institutional reforms in development often do not lead to improved government and how they can be better structured to achieve such a goal.*



8) [Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution](#), Thomas Carothers, Diane de Gramont, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013

*Nothing can stay away from politics.* Or in other words, politics are deeply rooted in every aspect of our lives.

While offering us a brief introduction to the history of development assistance, the volume *Development Aid confronts politics: The Almost Revolution* is mainly focused on the strongly interlinked relation between politics and development aid.

In order to fully understand it and achieve a synthesis of political and socioeconomic concerns, authors try to consider all the multiple meanings of *working politically* in development assistance and thus, seem to open up a Pandora's box full of challenges, problematic issues and critics, all related to international development aid.

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Many great readings and authors are missing from this list (James Ferguson, Charles Tilly, Amartya Sen, Jeffrey Sachs, and many others).

However, our intention was not to come up with an exhaustive list, but to give you a glimpse of what has been recently published in the field of international development in the last two years.

Get connected to global and regional debates! Happy reading!

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## With Professor Thomas Pogge on the SDGs

Thomas Pogge, November 6<sup>th</sup> 2014:



The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG) on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** has formulated a draft of the SDGs, proposing **17 goals**, which summarize **169 targets**. There is still time to improve the draft in the run-up to the UNGA meeting in September 2015. Among the most important improvements to be made are these.

(1) Goal 10, to reduce inequality, looks laudable but then laughable upon inspection: we should “by 2030 progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the



population at a rate higher than the national average.” In other words, inequality may increase without limit until 2030 so long as it then starts declining just before the SDGs expire.

(2) After witnessing many cosmetic revisions of definitions and measurement methods involved in the Millennium Development Goals, with each revision making our efforts against poverty look more impressive, we should insist that no such revisions be allowed from now on. Moreover, the measurement of progress should not be left to politically exposed and vulnerable international agencies, such as the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization, but be entrusted to a group of respectable academic experts.

(3) The SDGs should not merely express wishes that this or that should happen but should assign concrete tasks to competent agents, esp. to the most powerful governments and enterprises. Here reforms of the structural causes of poverty are crucial. The rich countries should agree to stop facilitating illicit financial outflows from the poor countries, to stop imposing their protectionism and pollution on the world without compensation, to stop blocking poor populations’ access to advanced medicines, to stop blocking the adoption of decent global labor standards, and to stop supporting dictators by paying them for their countries’ natural resources or by lending them money or selling them arms.

Never has persistent severe poverty been more easily avoidable and hence a greater moral scandal. We must eradicate it as quickly as we possibly can.

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**Mr Thomas Pogge** is the Director of the Global Justice Program and the Leitner Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs at Yale University.

He is also president of [Academics Stand Against Poverty](#) (ASAP), an international professional association focused on helping poverty researchers and teachers enhance their positive impact on severe poverty. He is the author of several well-known books, such as *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (second edition, 2008), *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right: Who Owes What to the Very Poor?* (editor, 2007), *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice* (2007), and *Realizing Rawls* (1989).

For more on Thomas Pogge, visit his [website](#).

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## Inquiring the promotion of the MDGs in Romania. A discussion with FOND



Since 2007, the Romanian NDGD platform (FOND) is actively involved in increasing the capacity of member civil society organizations in implementing, advocating and monitoring projects and programs in the field of international development and humanitarian aid. As a major actor in the field, a strategic partner of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, FOND has contributed to the promotion of MDGs and enhanced the role of Romania as a new ODA donor country at a local and regional level.

Interviewing **Ms Adela Rusu**, the Coordinator of the [FOND](#) platform, the Romanian NDGO platform which offers support to NGO's working and/or willing to implement projects in the fields of development and cooperation.

**Alexandra: Adela, what was the role of FOND in promoting the MDGs at national level? Could you summarize the main activities in this regard and sum up their impact?**

*Adela:* The Romanian NGDO Platform, which currently has 36 NGOs active in development cooperation, development education and humanitarian aid, has as main role representing its members and very importantly, acts as a support center. It provides the members (for their projects and activities) relevant information and policy briefs on the global agenda, for example on issues such as development effectiveness and the Millennium Development Goals, and more recently on the post-2015 agenda. More specifically, the platform was involved in awareness raising campaign promoting the Global Call for Action against Poverty' campaign "Stand Up and Take Action" (2008-2009), focused on achieving MDG1 on extreme poverty and supported different campaigns on MGDs implemented by members in recent years. Recently, the platform has taken the role of facilitating national debates on the MDGs agenda by organizing since 2010 an annual event for the national development community – The Romanian Development Camp, with support from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (as national coordinator of development cooperation) and UNDP – Bratislava Regional Center. The last edition of RDC hosted a debate on the new post-2015 agenda and provided input from the participants for the national position on this important issue.



So, FOND has been mostly involved in raising awareness and facilitating debates on the MDGs and post-2015 agenda, which is very much needed in the Romanian context as development cooperation is not very visible in the public space.

**Alexandra: One of the main objectives of FOND is the maintenance of an active implication of the Romanian CS**

**organizations in the field of international development and humanitarian aid. How does FOND seek to stimulate the activity of Romanian NGOs in the field, and the coherence and efficiency of their efforts? How does FOND connect its members to European and global debates in this field and support their active engagement in global discussions?**

*Adela:* Besides the activities mentioned previously, FOND provides capacity consolidation tailor-made for the needs of the members by organizing trainings and workshops (project proposal writing, advocacy, campaigning, different policy issues: Policy Coherence for Development, the new multiannual EU budget and its effects for the NGDO sector, European Year for Development, Sustainable Development Goals ...) and facilitating the Working Groups of the platform (Policy/Advocacy, Development Education, Humanitarian Aid) by fostering sharing lessons learnt and good practices among the members. For instance, in November we organized a workshop on effective campaigning tools relevant for the Romanian context, as to better prepare the members who will be engaged in promoting the European Year for Development (which will be celebrated in 2015).

FOND connects its members with the regional and international context in two ways: It provides a direct connection with potential partners from Romania's ODA priority countries, by organizing NGO events to support networking, study visits and project writing, such as: The Black Sea NGO Forum (organized since 2008), The Romania-R. Moldova NGO Forum (2010, 2011) which later developed in the Mobility Fund for Experts from Romania and R. Moldova (2013, 2014). This year's edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum will take place in early December (8-10) in Kiev.



In addition, FOND is an active member of The European Confederation of NGOs in Development and Relief (CONCORD) and

the International Forum of National NGOs Platform, as well as a partner in two European projects with other similar platforms from the European Union. More recently, FOND has been engaged with the Beyond 2015 campaign by taking part in the European Task Force of this initiative. These connections provide the members with updated and digested information on the development debates at the European and global level and networking opportunities (identifying partners, resource persons, relevant good practices...) and also the opportunity to promote the members' interest and priorities at the European level. It brings visibility to FOND and its members. Since this year, FOND even has a representative elected in CONCORD Board.

**Alexandra: What could be the contribution of the Romanian NGOs in the overall debate that will lead to the new international development agenda?**

*Adela:* The Romanian NGOs provide relevant input on what the priorities should be for the new agenda, based on their experience of promoting the MGDs and on the needs of the beneficiaries of their projects. Their contribution has been emphasized during the last edition of the Romanian Camp VII (which I have already mentioned above) and also is being used as valuable input for the debates at the regional level through our involvement in CONCORD (Beyond 2015 – European Task Force).

**Alexandra: What kind of new synergies, partnerships and policies do you envisage for FOND in the near future in order to address the new SDGs both at national and regional level?**

*Adela:* FOND will continue strengthening its current partnerships at national level (with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant national stakeholders, such as the Parliament) and at European level (CONCORD and the European institutions, especially the European Parliament). At the international level, we're exploring the opportunity to

promote again global campaigns such as Action/2015, initiated by the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). And of course, we are open to other partnership proposals from other NGOs or different actors interested in this issue.

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# **The Importance of Education for Sustainable Development**

Throughout history, humans have developed by learning, creating new ways to improve their life and in the process they amassed a large body of knowledge which was and still is currently transmitted to new generations through education. The knowledge and skills an education confers is merely an instrument and its purpose depends entirely on the individual possessing it. For the most part of history, humans have used knowledge only to improve their way of life usually at the cost of the environment but today we are faced with its unsustainability. Therefore, I shall argue that the best way of surpassing the challenge of sustainable development is enhancing our current system of education to include more aspects of sustainability. This is what I consider to be the most pressing need that should be globally addressed and highlighted by the new development agenda.

## **Emphasizing education**



Currently, education has been an important part of global development as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which consists of achieving universal primary education. Over the years, the level of education did improve but it can be argued that without first eliminating

poverty and hunger and also improving a child's health, education cannot be a priority. For example, in Malawi, Africa, 'attending school now is a hit-and-miss affair. Children are in and out of school with illness. Their attendance depends on how urgently they are needed at home to fetch water and firewood, or to care for siblings or cousins; on whether they can afford to buy supplies, a uniform, and pay local fees; and on the safety of walking several kilometers to the school itself' (Sachs 2005, p.23).

On some level, all MDGs are interdependent but if the aforementioned problems can be reduced, through short-term solutions like foreign aid, to a scale that will permit children to attend school then education will become the force that drives global development. This can be accomplished through a few steps.

First of all, after achieving a basic level of well-being that allows families to send their children to school, education will eventually confer individuals the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their economic standing. They will be sufficiently competent to occupy better positions in a society with higher incomes and thus evading poverty and hunger. 'It is well established that the distribution of personal incomes in society is strongly related to the amount of education people have had. Generally speaking, more schooling means higher lifetime incomes' (UNESCO 2005, p.40) Although a

quality education that provides useful cognitive skills is more important than a quantitative one (UNESCO 2005), numerous studies have found that 'the rate of return to schooling across countries is centered at about 10%, with returns higher for low-income countries, for lower levels of schooling, and frequently for women' (Hanushek & Wößmann 2007, p.2). Basically, an analysis of education and income levels leads to the conclusion that one year of education is worth a 10% increased income. This mechanism is why education is an excellent instrument for increasing the economic and social mobility of individuals that contribute to the development of a state by improving its human capital.

Another major benefit of education is that it leads to the improved health of individuals. Educated persons are able to adopt a healthy way of living by knowing all sorts of habits that sustain and prolong life. More importantly they are 'better prepared to prevent diseases and to use health services effectively. A woman with six or more years of education is more likely to seek prenatal care, assisted childbirth, and postnatal care, reducing the risk of maternal and child mortality illness' (Center for Global Development, 2002.).

At this point it is evident that education is a necessary investment for global development because better education leads to the improvement of other current MDGs and numerous benefits like better governance. But what the previous decades have shown us is that education, even in developed countries, has not brought large scale awareness about the lack of sustainability of our way of life. The prevalent mindset adopted through education is consumerism with too little regard to caring and preserving the environment. This type of education is a part of the problem but it can also be a part of the solution because it 'is essential for improving the capacity of people to address environmental and development issues, which are inextricably tied to sustainable



development'(Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.1).

Recognizing the importance of education to all other aspects of development and that it is essential to sustainability, the United Nations established the practice of Education for Sustainable Development (EDS) and respectively, a Decade of EDS (2005-2014) led by UNESCO. In its view, EDS 'allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. EDS means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; it also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development'(UNESCO, n.d.). In order for this new curriculum in education to be successful it needs to be preceded by a change in people's mentality. Individuals must first learn to care to protect the world. As Stephen Sterling stated EDS is more than simply adding sustainability concepts to the curriculum but also a cultural shift in education and learning, based on a more ecological or relational view of the world.(Sterling 2001).

The importance of education in our pursuit of sustainable development is highlighted by two major aspects. First of all, education is strongly related with technological advancement. The better educated and knowledgeable an individual is, the higher the chance that he will be able to make scientific discoveries that improve the sustainability of our way of life. The best example is the large scale use of clean, renewable energy like solar and wind power that were made possible by dedicated people who research such issues. Without the proper education, these individuals would not have been able to do so. Further scientific discoveries and



technological improvements can render obsolete or at least minimize the damage of our current polluting ways of producing energy and other products.

Secondly, the progress of technology tends to be rather slow when compared with the urgency of our problems, so in order to develop in a sustainable manner we have to better manage our resources. The current system and mentality has led to an immense waste and although our current technology can minimize it, not much effort has been put into it because many do not care about the consequences or either they are not aware of the impact our wasteful way of life has on others and the planet. To this problem, one of the best solutions is an education for sustainable development that can change people's mindset and bring awareness on how our actions affect the world. 'For example, overconsumption of consumer goods such as paper leads to deforestation, which may contribute to global climate change. The ability to consider an issue from the view of different stakeholders is essential to sustainable



development education' (Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.4). This example brings up the problem of recycling and its still small scale practice, the massive waste of roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption (FOA, 2011). Food that people in the least developed countries are in

dire need of and also other resources that are squandered. By including even in basic level of education, more knowledge, skills and values that promote sustainability, these challenges can be surpassed.

Finally, the most important reason why education must be emphasized among all other development goals is because eliminating poverty, hunger, inequality and combating diseases

does not bring us closer to a sustainable world. But an enhanced education can solve poverty and most of the problems associated with income insufficiency by improving economic growth; it can lead to higher life expectancy and pave the way to a sustainable world through technological improvements and better resource management.

## **Conclusion**

In spite of all its benefits, education isn't a miracle solution to all the problems of global sustainable development. To reach a high level of EDS is itself a challenge and 'while many nations around the world have embraced the need for education in achieving sustainability, only limited progress has been made on any level. This lack of progress stems from many sources. In some cases, a lack of vision or awareness has impeded progress. In others, it is a lack of policy or funding' (Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.1). But of all the possible solutions and means to achieve sustainable development, education is still the best option we have at the moment. At the very least, the awareness for the need of sustainability has grown, considering the changes in my mindset to be a testimony of this fact among the growing number of people and organizations who desire a sustainable world.

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**Mr Emil Luchian** is a graduate from the University of Bucharest, the faculty of Philosophy, where he obtained his BA degree in European Studies. His research areas of interests are in the field of International Relations and Geopolitics. Mr Emil Luchian wrote for PoliticAll and completed an internship at the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE) in Bucharest.

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Photo credits:

World Bank/Alfredo Srur, "A student in a classroom in Tegucigalpa, Honduras."

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# **CONFLICT AND THE NEW OBJECTIVES OF THE HUMANKIND**

*The paper investigates the connection between conflict and*

*sustainable development seen as a target of the international community. The paper aims to demonstrate that the current MDGs and future SDGs will not be achieved if greater emphasis will not be placed on the prevention and management of conflicts. Violent conflicts matter because they are fertile ground for poverty, regional instability, terrorism, diseases and death. Therefore, in order to eradicate all these problems, conflict should be placed on the policy map and measures for preventing, managing and resolving should be foreseen.*

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Following **the Millennium Summit** from 2000, UN has adopted **the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, a series of 8 targets to be fulfilled by 2015, aiming at eradicating and solving the following humankind problems: poverty and hungry, lack of education, child mortality, gender inequality, HIV and other diseases, environmental degradation, through a global partnership formed by international organizations and states.

As progress reports show, by the end of 2014, many developing countries were on their way to achieve the MDGs except the conflict affected states. Only 12 of 40 conflict affected states have reached one or two MDGs (like reducing poverty), an improved situation compared to 2011, when none of them reached any MDGs. However, the progress remains a modest one, the conflict affected states severely lagging “behind the rest of the developing countries in terms of meeting the MDGs”. (World Bank 2013, 2)

Given the negative relation between conflict and the possibility of reaching the MDGs, the current essay argues on the importance of considering and therefore treating the **prevention, management and resolution of conflicts** as one of the new Sustainable Development Goals in order to achieve all the other targets formulated by the UN.

In this paper, we understand “conflict” as organized violence

which includes: “state actions against other states or against civilians, civil wars, electoral violence between opposing sides, communal clashes based on regional, ethnic, religious or other group identities or competing economic interests, gang-based violence and organized crime and international non-state armed movements with ideological aims.” (World Bank 2011, xv) Since 1945, the number of conflicts registered in the human history reached 331, with 32 ongoing conflicts leaving behind 26 million deaths. (Marshall, 2014) Although the number of inter-states wars, civil wars and coup d’état has fallen since 1990, [the Global Peace Index 2014 Report](#) considers that the overall trend of the world has seen a slight deterioration of peace since 2007. The conflicts taken place today are affecting the same states repeatedly diminishing their capacity to develop and prosper. According to the World Bank , “90% of the last decade’s civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a civil war in the last 30 years” (World Bank 2011, 2).

Scholars argue the existence of a **connection between economic growth/decline and conflict**. According to this theory, where countries start to develop, wars are becoming less possible because people are more interested in keeping the wellbeing; where development fails, states are at risk of conflict by slowing down the economy and concentrating the precarious resources in the hands of small group generating frustration for the others. Paul Collier, in his masterpiece “The Bottom Billion”, claims that “unless economic growth takes place post-conflict, a nation has a 44% chance of slipping back into violence”. (Mercy Corp 2011, 3) The economists from the World Bank go further advancing the idea of a **“violence trap”**: countries are poor because they are affected by conflict and are dragged into conflict because they are poor. People join violent movement due to the lack of opportunities caused by country instability. (Collier et all 2003, 1) Therefore, the “violence trap” cannot be overcome unless economic situation is improved at a national level, institutions gain public

trust and start functioning properly and resources distribution is becoming more equal. Walton (Helpdesk Research Report 2011) mentions that civil wars often start following growth collapses (the growth rate during the five years prior to conflict averages -0.5%, compared to 2% in peaceful countries) associated to other factors as demographic consistency of the population, external shocks, distribution and exploitation of natural resources. Because of its deep negative relation with development, conflict puts in danger the reach of any MDGs and in future of any Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in conflict affected states with direct effects on their neighbors. The economic cost of violence at global level was in 2013, 9.8 trillion USD. The amount equates to 11.3% of the global GDP or to 1.350 USD per person, a figure which could lift out of poverty the total population living under the 2\$ threshold. (Institute for Economic& Peace 2014, 3)

**From a social and human costs perspective,** conflict affects today almost one-and-a-half billion people which are becoming more exposed to the lack of food, education and health, all of them goals set by UN. According to World Bank, one in four people on the planet lives in areas affected by conflict. People in conflicted-affected areas are “twice as likely to be under-nourished as those in other developing countries”, thrice as likely to be unable to go to school, twice as likely to die before age five and more than “twice as likely to lack clean water” (World Bank 2011, 5). UNHCR appreciate that “at the end of 2013, 51.2 million people were forcibly **displaced** due to violence”. (UNHCR 2013, 2) Developing countries host 86% of the world’s refugees adding an additional burden to their weak economy by providing additional social services. Refugees may compete with local citizens for scarce resources inducing tensions (Gomez& Christensen 2010, 7). **Poverty** represents a challenge to overcome in conflict. It is estimated that the average agriculture production losses reach 12% per year. “War,

therefore, by increasing the gap between food production and need, aggravates poverty and hunger, and consequently promotes continued dependence on food aid". (UNEP 2006, para.3) One of the main problems in conflict affected states is related to **health**. Violence results in millions of people injured, traumatized and exposed to communicable and non-communicable diseases. (Roberts 2012) For instance, polio outbreak in Middle East during Syria conflict after being totally eradicated. (Vargha, 2014) Although getting an **education** is an universal human right, 40 million children from conflict affected states are out of school (War child, "Access to education", para. 4). Proliferation of attacks on schools (3.600 in 2013 according to Tran 2013 para. 2), lack of personal documents, killing or injuring of teachers and pupils, flee of families, lack of financial support to pursue education, force children to renounce to school.

Conflict affects in a large measure another goal set in MDGs: **gender equality**. During conflict time, woman vulnerability increases opening the path to sexual abuses, force marriage, exploitation, domestic violence and trafficking. (Gomez& Christensen 2010, 12) Conflict has a negative impact on **environment**. Refugee camp can reshape the landscape by excessively use of local resources. "Habitat degradation, reduced access to water points [...], species loss, alteration of the natural food chain, and additional pressure on biodiversity" are other effects that conflict may have over the environment. (UNEP 2006, para.13)

**Conclusion:** Given the economic, social and human costs, as well as the negative impact on health, education, gender equality and environment, the new SDGs should include also the **prevention, management and resolution of conflict** as one of the main targets.

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**Ms Roxana Romanica** is a Master student in International Development at the University of A.I. Cuza from Iasi. Roxana is passionate for conflict resolution and peacebuilding and was involved in educational projects addressed to Syrian Refugees from Turkey. She is coordinating projects in democracy field and militates for peace in Syria and Palestine.

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Photo credits: Alexandra Sabou, May 2014, Gal/i region, Abkhazia

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**Academics Stand Against**

# Poverty – Romania



## What is ASAP-Romania?

ASAP Romania is an initiative of [Academics Stand Against Poverty](#) (ASAP), an international network helping scholars and students enhance their impact on global poverty. It does so by promoting collaboration amongst poverty-focused academics, by helping them reach out to broader audiences on issues of poverty, and by helping them turn their expertise into impact through specific intervention projects as well as campaigns on specific issues.



ASAP's president, **Prof. Thomas Pogge** of **Yale University**, announced the initiative of building **the Romanian Chapter**

during his visit at **the 2014 Romanian Development Camp**, where he gave two lectures regarding the role of academia in combating global poverty and how to track progress against deprivations.

### ***How is ASAP distinctive from other poverty-focused organizations?***

First and foremost, among ASAP's members are internationally recognized experts who are contributing with rigorous reviews on the work on poverty, trying to bring the research and the solutions proposed at the academic levels outside the ivory tower and have a real impact. Second, its network is extended globally, including numerous universities and academics, especially promoting North-South collaboration among its members, with a strong focus on creating opportunities for those who face barriers to full participation in the global academic dialogue.

ASAP is headed by Prof. Thomas Pogge (Yale University) along with the [board of directors](#). The [advisory board](#) includes prominent academics such as Prof. Peter Singer (Princeton), Prof. Paul Collier (Oxford), Prof. Ha-Joon Chang (Cambridge), Prof. Sabina Alkire (Oxford), Branko Milanovic (CUNY, formerly a leading economist at the World Bank) and many other experts working in the field of poverty.

### ***Why Romania?***



ASAP constantly aims to develop its network by opening chapters in parts of the world that it did not cover before.

Eastern Europe represents such a region, and Romania is a country presenting two important characteristics for this choice. First, Romania is one of the European countries most affected by poverty and where action is urgently needed. Second, Romanian academics should be able to participate with their work in the global academic dialogue and increase their impact on poverty eradication.

### ***How can Romanian scholars contribute to ASAP's mission?***

The overarching aim of ASAP is to contribute to the eradication of severe poverty worldwide and to ensure that poverty policy and development efforts are guided by rigorous empirical and normative scholarship. ASAP's ultimate concern is for people, not for countries, thus it focuses on poor people from both affluent and less-affluent countries.

ASAP Romania is on the path of developing the first chapter in Eastern Europe which will be involved in ASAP's [international projects](#) as well as develop local/regional related projects. In this context, we invite Romanian academics and experts whose work is focused on poverty to get involved or to become members, and to participate in our [Global Colleagues Project](#). ASAP's members are eager to share their expertise in public debates and policy dialogues where they have the opportunity to be heard and to work with their peers around the world.

### ***Who else is contributing to this mission?***

ASAP has Chapters launched or in development in Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, India, Italy, Germany, Mexico, Oceania, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Africa. In total, more than 1,200 ASAP members work and study in universities, research centers and NGOs worldwide.

***In the context of the upcoming SDGs, how could academics enhance their positive impact on poverty? / Could you give a concrete example of ASAP's work regarding the SDGs?***

In 2012 at Yale University, ASAP has launched the [Institutional Reform Goals](#) project, a research and advocacy project that aims for the reform of supranational institutional rules and practices that are worsening poverty globally.

### ***Why should we care about systemic reform?***

A systemic reform of global institutions is a focal point in the debate regarding the post-2015 development agenda. Given the time-sensitive nature of this debate and official deliberations on the subject, IRG's **short-term** focus is on the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). This means our objective is to ensure that the emerging SDGs are made as good as they can realistically be. Like many other civil society organizations, we call for the inclusion of meaningful language, in the new development goals, on issues such as human rights and inequality reduction. Our focus, however, is to advocate for the strongest possible emphasis on accountability, and on systemic reforms of global institutions. We will intervene in the ongoing post-2015 debates through a variety of methods, such as producing and circulating original, research-based policy briefs articulating our objectives, and organizing awareness-raising campaigns with collaborating institutions.

Such an undertaking was already successfully carried out combining the efforts of ASAP's global network. More than 50 experts signed an open letter to Ban Ki-moon, UN's Secretary General, asking him to push for the inclusion of specific policies in the SDGs that would stop tax abuse, a practice that severely affects developing countries and increases global poverty. The letter circulated in a [petition campaign](#), where ASAP Romania made an important contribution toward raising the symbolic number of 2015 signatures. This shows a rising interest on behalf of Romanian citizens to have a voice in the global decision-making.

Moving into the **longer term**, we have identified ten focus areas in which the reform of global rules and practices could have a major impact on human development and poverty eradication: (1) **illicit financial flows**, (2) **international resource and borrowing privileges**, (3) **intellectual property law**, (4) **democratization and accountability**, (5) **international labor standards**, (6) **international trade**, (7) **environmental sustainability and climate change**, (8) **global migration**, (9) **the arms trade**, and (10) **debt**.

For each of our focus areas, we will:

1. Articulate politically feasible institutional reform **goals and illustrative targets** to be presented through research-backed policy papers.
2. Work to build a broad coalition of academics and civil society members to support our call for new **institutional reform goals**.
3. Promote these **institutional reform goals** widely (as a first step, by engaging with and intervening in the post-MDG debate).

ASAP's IRG project is ambitious and unique. While other NGOs are campaigning in many of the 10 areas we have identified, very few understand them as systematically interrelated.

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## **INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AID AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY KOBOLD**

The starting point of this article is the assertion that development policies aim to modify certain sets of behaviour



which ultimately strive at improving human life and potential, primarily developing infrastructures and building the means for that new behaviour to be sustainable and become part of the local mindset.

Some time ago I took part in a heated debate on whether or not culture should play a role in the framework of international aid and more importantly, in the process and management of the aid efforts. Of course, if we were to debate an abstract situation, we would think of culture as a factor which would logically have to be taken in account as long as one functions within a cultural environment which in itself is tributary to its own characteristics. However, as most aid programs do not deal with abstract matters but actual forms of human sufferance, things can get a little uncomfortable to say the least.

Before we charge head-on into sensitive matters though, let us spend a little more time on some abstract yet very tangible aspects of intercultural communication. Thus, there would be two main attitudes with which we could start the abovementioned debate: an ethnocentric one or one of cultural relativism. Both these attitudes towards culture and ultimately people and their mindsets, have traps that one may become a victim of. Nonetheless, behaviour that is practiced over and over again shapes our personalities up to the point that some behaviours are not necessarily logical or beneficial but are regarded as positive because of their wide-spread use and tradition.

If we were to adopt an ethnocentric attitude (from a Western/European point of view), then we would acknowledge that there are several universal truths to this world and human rights are definitely among them. Thus, the female genitalia mutilation phenomenon that takes place in certain parts of the world is something immoral, unlawful, unjust and illegal and it goes against the very principles that our society is based on. If we were to engage with a community

that enforces the aforementioned practices, the way we would implement an aid project would be to confront the phenomenon head-on and as long as we can do something, prevent any and every case that it is in our power to stop. With the adequate political support and funding of the project, we would hope that in time we would reach a goal that a certain percent of the young female population would not have to suffer from genitalia mutilation.

If our choice was a culturally relativist attitude, we would first acknowledge that even if female genitalia mutilation is immoral, unlawful, unjust and illegal in our own culture, it may be an accepted practice in that place where it is practiced. Nevertheless, our purpose in implementing an aid project on the subject within that particular area would be the same, which would still be reducing the percent of young females that are mutilated in this way. However, the approach would have to be a little different, underlining the mindset, not necessarily the practices themselves. Of course, practices are important but the society that practices them is the ultimate arbiter of their use. A certain cultural community, just like markets, has a certain degree of permeability. This means that certain behaviours of the people from that community may permit us to engage with them to a lesser or to a greater degree. The less permeable a cultural community is (of course, also taking in account our instruments of engagement), the harder it is to produce change in people's mindsets. Inescapably, international aid projects have a start date and an end one but the people that live in the targeted communities will continue to exist there long after the foreign change agent has been long gone. Also, it is important to note that targeted communities are not isolated in most cases, they continually interact with other communities which may or may not retain traditional behaviours related to the targeted phenomenon.

The two attitudes described are ideal types, an optimal

attitude most probably benefiting from both the concepts presented. However, the question remains: What happens after the project ends or attention focuses from one region to another? Culture is hard to pinpoint within a statistical report but it exists nonetheless. Practiced behaviour that gives birth to certain mindsets weave people together like an invisible web which can garner an extraordinary counter-force to change, even if the change is, paradoxically, a beneficial one to that society. The web, on the other hand, is as strong as the individual strains that construct it and in this case the people and the families that practice female genitalia mutilation.

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**Mr Călin Georgia** is PhD candidate at Babes-Bolyai University and managing partner at The Intercultural Group, a network specialized in offering cultural intelligence services.

He holds a BA degree in Law and a MA degree in Political Science and International Relations and specialized in informal Islamic justice systems and Intercultural Communication. His studies are backed up by his professional experience; Călin has worked in the legal field for two years, between 2008 and 2010, when he started to work for the Institute of Turkish and Central-Asian Studies. In 2013 he became a licensed trainer and started his Ph.D programme and teaching activities at Babes-Bolyai University (Romania). He coordinates and facilitates Intercultural Communication trainings and seminars, using both formal and non-formal education.

Photo credits: Mohammad Rakibul Hasan, UNDP.

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# Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan (CPCA)



## Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan (CPCA): A Joint Romanian-Afghan Effort

The [Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan](#) project represents a one year joint Romanian-Afghan endeavour, having as aim the highlight and analysis of peace consolidation related capacity building gaps, challenges, achievements, lessons identified, and “best-fit” solutions in Afghanistan on the eve of the 2014 transition process and the 2015 MDG mark. As an integral part of Romania’s Official Development Assistance policy, the implementation of the project was made possible with the financial assistance of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the Official Development Assistance budget, in partnership with UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre, and is being implemented by the [Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania](#) (PATRIR) in partnership with the Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) from Afghanistan.

The CPCA project was developed as a result of a series of consultations with various Afghan and international organisations engaged in peace consolidation and sustainable development activities, which have highlighted the need i) to enhance Afghan ownership over peacebuilding and peace consolidation capacities required by a peaceful transition process; ii) to highlight the link between the nationally and locally owned peacebuilding and peace consolidation programmes

and the successful engagement with the MDG targets; iii) to boost national, local and community based capacities to reach the MDG targets in the post-2014 transition period through the use of peacebuilding and peace consolidation skills and knowledge; iv) to place a central role on the traditional Afghan peacebuilding and peace consolidation practices; v) to strengthen the role of Afghan civil society in development of such capacities for national and local use.

In order to reply to these needs, the project had foreseen the development and implementation of a series of activities with multi-stakeholder character, in two phases: a needs assessment phase and a capacity building phase. The target group chosen for the project included key government/ state actors, policy and decision makers dealing with development, peacebuilding and peace consolidation in Afghanistan, key civil society/ non-state actors active in the same or adjacent domains, staff of UN agencies and peacekeeping missions and EUPOL personnel.



The first phase of the project was made up of a four months long capacity building needs assessment process, containing a comprehensive desk review process of relevant Afghan and international reports and resource materials on the status

of peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities and programmes existent within the country. Coupled with this, the assessment team had undertaken a multi-stakeholder interview and survey process, involving representatives of the before-mentioned target group. After having overviewed more than two hundred online and hard-copy documents, more than thirty five online interviews and lectures, and having conducted more than sixty interviews and surveys, the seven-member assessment team had drawn a series of conclusions and presented relevant recommendations

regarding the link between peace consolidation and development, peace consolidation and development related capacity building needs on the ground and existing strengths on which to build further efforts. The second phase of the project involved a four-day capacity building programme entitled “Collaborative Efforts for Building National Capacities for Peace Consolidation and Sustainable Development in Afghanistan”, bringing together fifteen Afghan practitioners engaged in peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development.

The findings of the project show that “defining and contributing to the process of peace consolidation in the 2014’s Afghanistan proves to be a challenging undertaking, due to the narrow connotation such a concept has received in the light of the impending security transition: that of general peace-making” (Observation made by UNDP Afghanistan staff of Afghan nationality). Basing strategy and action on the principles of systemic engagement, multi-stakeholder approach, national ownership and legitimacy, cumulative impact creation and evidence-based / demand-driven engagement aids in expanding and creating an integrated understanding of the concept itself, towards constructive and sustainable results. As such, peace consolidation needs to be understood from the perspective of positive peace creation, in which, based on the absence of direct violence, equitable and integrated outputs and outcomes are developed in the spheres of economy, social services, politics, justice, human relations, and constructive conflict resolution. Essentially, successful peace consolidation may be achieved only through the interrelated cycle of peacebuilding/ peacemaking/ peacekeeping, sustainable development, and nationally owned capacities (Kacsó et al. 2014).”

Further on, the assessment team concluded that there is a series of historical and contextual factors impacting and being impacted by the lack of proper capacity, among which the

general state-building project, the military and human security situation, the socio-economic and cultural realities and the available resources. The customization of international capacity building programmes to the particularities of Afghanistan's culture and context is quite scarce, which is coupled with a low level of local and national ownership of capacities and capacity building programmes serving peace consolidation and development. Due to a siloed work practice among the different actors, the cumulative impact of the capacity building programmes is minimal, especially when most of the programmes provided follow a supply- and donor-driven approach and little integration of previous lessons learned and local capacities.

The appraisal of existing capacity building strengths in Afghanistan has highlighted a series of principles aiding the consolidation of capacity building. Among these we may find a strive towards unitary planning and strategizing based on comprehensive situation analysis, country-led processes, the respect of dialogic principles in capacity building processes, and several others. The high awareness level of the interconnectedness between peace, conflict and development is coupled with gradually strengthened cooperation mechanisms between actors, both contributing to the decrease of dependency on foreign peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities. In order to contribute to the sustainable development of Afghanistan, the majority of actors attempt to link to a more or lesser degree with national peace consolidation and sustainable development objectives, traditional Afghan peace mechanisms, and the Afghan National Development Strategy in particular.

The project, which is scheduled to end in December 2014, has managed to link closely not only with the existing MDG agenda, but also with the upcoming post-2015 UN Development one. Tackling the link between development and peace and security concerns, the project was developed and implemented closely in

line with the UN System Task Team's "Peace and Security" Thematic Think Piece, offering a set of recommendations in the direction of systemic peacebuilding strategy development and implementation, and related capacity building requirements.

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**Dr. Zsuzsanna Kacsó** is a peacebuilding and violence prevention practitioner and consultant of the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is also associate professor on conflict analysis within the Babes-Bolyai University. Her areas of expertise include: conflict analysis, strategic & systemic peacebuilding, electoral violence prevention, future planning and scenario building, organisational development and knowledge management. She has worked in Romania, Moldova-Transdnistria, Singapore, UK, Northern Ireland, Liberia, Nepal, Egypt.

**Ms Adelina Decean** is an Associate of the Department of Peace Operations (PATRIR) and the Coordinator of the International Peace and Development Training Center of PATRIR. Her experience emerges from engagements at the level of civil society as well as international organizations and the UN. Her previous and current engagements have included projects in the MENA region, in Lebanon and in Nepal. Adelina holds a bachelor degree in International Relations and European Studies and two MA degrees in Sustainable Development and in International Development Studies, both from the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

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# Migration as a driver for development



The emergence of a long-awaited global consensus on the MDGs during the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit laid the foundations of a new era of worldwide cooperation and common development framework. With the imminent expiry of the eight time-bound goals rapidly approaching, the international

community has been actively engaged in discussions on how to advance and reshape the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. In the light of the latest shifts in human mobility and migration patterns, it becomes clear that migration must be brought to the negotiation table. More specifically, since the adoption of the original MDGs in 2000, international migration flows have increased by approximately one third, from 175 million international migrants in 2000 to 232 million in 2013 (UN DESA 2013). The same source highlights shifting global migration trends, with a substantial increase in the global South – South migration (between developing countries) which almost equals the South –North migration (from developing to developed countries) (UN DESA 2013).

Reaching a global consensus on the adoption of the eight MDGs was a long-term process which took almost 10 years. This might account for the fact that migration – a politically controversial topic, and at the same time a goal difficult to measure – slipped away from the negotiation table. It is interesting to note the shift in perception of migration at the time of the adoption of the MDGs and its evolution up to today. The 2001 UN Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration refers to migration as

one of the factors contributing to the worsening of global malaria problem, and portrays migrants as “victims of discrimination, racism and intolerance” (UN General Assembly 2001). Fortunately, a departure from this point of view is to be seen in the 2005 final report of the UN Millennium Project, called “Investing in Development: A Practical Way to Achieve the MDGs” (UN Millennium Project 2005). More specifically, the report shows an evolution of the concept of migrants portraying them as agents of development in the context of poverty-alleviation. The migration-development nexus was reiterated in further conferences such as the Second Earth Summit in 2002 “Rio +20” UNGA High Level Dialogues (HLDs) in 2006 and 2013 as well (Lönnback 2014).

### **Why should migration be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda?**

Migration has the potential to boost both the economy of the country of origin and of the host country. Firstly, the remittances sent back home by migrants are crucial to reducing household poverty by providing an additional income which can be used in various ways in order to meet the family’s needs. According to the World Bank, remittances sent to developing countries exceed up to three times the amount of official development assistance received (The World Bank n.d.) and at the same time are comparable, if not higher than the export earnings of the recipient countries. For instance, in Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, remittances exceeded the total earnings from exports of goods and services. Another case in point is India, where in 2013 the value of remittances was higher than the earnings coming from the export services of its vibrant IT industry (The World Bank 2014).

Remittances have been shown to be an extremely powerful tool for poverty reduction in developing countries, which has been correlated with increased child schooling, especially among girls, as reported in Pakistan (Ratha 2013). Likewise, it has been shown that households which receive remittances tend to

invest more in health care than those which do not receive remittances.

In the light of the illustrated impact, it becomes evident that migrant remittances actually contribute to the achievement of the original MDGs by reducing poverty and hunger (MDG 1), contributing to an increase in child schooling, including primary education (MDG 2) especially among girls, with positive impact on efforts to achieve gender equality (MDG 3). Furthermore, migrant remittances also contribute to health care improvement, which results in reduction of child mortality (MDG 4), maternal health improvement (MDG 5) and stepping up efforts in preventing or combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, other diseases (MDG 6) and ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG 7) by improving the access to safe water and sanitation.

Secondly, it has been argued that migrants can improve also the economy of the host country by “ tackling skills shortages and labour market bottlenecks.” (Andor 2014).

A recent study (OECD 2014) shows that the financial contribution that migrants make to the host country budgets through taxes and social security actually exceeds the benefits received. In addition, claims that migrants are draining the social welfare of the host country were found to be inaccurate by a report commissioned by the EC. It was shown that unemployed migrants represent a very small share of beneficiaries, with low impact on the social budgets of the host countries (Juravle et al. 2013). Beyond the taxes that migrants pay, they contribute to the development of the host countries by stimulating trade, investments and business.

Thirdly, migration also brings about an increase in the transfer of skills and innovation. For instance, in 2013, almost half of the patents applications in the U.S. were filed by foreign-born citizens. The same is valid also for the business sector where more than half of the start-ups in Silicon Valley were set up by citizens of foreign origin (Quittner 2014). Moreover, migrants are important agents for development since they facilitate links between private and

public sectors in both country of origin and country of destination and can even act as “the basis of business partnerships, trade, and flows of investment” between the two countries (House of Commons International Development Committee 2004). By acting as the facilitators of development between home and host country, migrant further global partnership for development, contributing to the achievement of the last of the eight MDGs.

To conclude, migration can be a driver for development in both home and host country. This is not to say that migration does not pose challenges. However, if efficiently governed, it can become a win-win process for the main parties concerned, i.e. country of origin and of destination but most importantly, for the migrants themselves. In order to do so, it is necessary that the international community agrees that the migration discourse must re-shift its focus from border control policies which basically see migration rather as a problem than as a solution. Likewise, seeing migration only in economic terms will not do since migrants might run the risk “to be regarded as commodities, rather than as individuals entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights” (The UN Committee on Migrant Workers 2005). Hence, migration should be dealt with from a holistic perspective within which human rights play a crucial role.

The post-2015 development agenda has the potential to successfully re-shift the focus from border control policies to the improvement of the quality of migration. Quality migration approach sees migration as a development enabler and hence not as a problem per se but as a solution. It implies the protection of migrants’ fundamental rights as human beings, protection of migrants’ labour rights as workers (decent work) and safe migration for potential and returning migrants. The human rights approach to migration and development should be understood in terms of quality improvement of the migration process and not in terms of increasing the number of migrants.

Given the migrants' contribution to the development of both home and destination countries and their undeniable positive impact on the achievement of the original MDGs, migration ought to become an integral part of the post-2015 development strategy. This will not only pave the way for a gradual expansion of migrants' rights but, in the words of Peter Sutherland, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Migration "[...] perhaps even more important, it could change public perceptions of migrants, so that they are viewed as a blessing rather than a scourge.'" (Sutherland 2013). This is to say that the potential of migration potential as a development enabler cannot be fully achieved unless migrants' human rights are protected and at the same time efforts are made to end the stigma and discrimination against migrants.

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**Ms Bianca-Ioanidia Mirea** holds a BA from the University of Bucharest (Romania) and a master's in European and

International Studies from the University of Trento (Italy), specialising in Human Rights Protection. Her main areas of interest are children and women's rights, topics she has explored first hand as a Research/ field work intern in various countries. She worked as an intern on children's rights at M.V. Foundation (India) and at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (Austria). Currently she is a Research Intern working on children's and women empowerment in Egypt.

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## **Teach for all, Teach for Romania**

**Primary education for all children** is crucially important in order to help them get off to the right start. A basic need and right for all children around a world enshrined as **Millennium Development Goal no. 2**, education is a multi-faceted issue that speaks about numerous challenges, problems and opportunities, different needs, different approaches and asks for an ongoing, accelerated and updated response both globally and locally.



It is already well-known that the country where a child is born determines the kind of education he or she will receive and, moreover, it influences their future professional endeavors and options in life. On average across countries, a child coming from Sub-Saharan African countries is less likely to complete primary school than a child from Western Europe.

However, in many countries with high primary completion rates, large numbers of school dropouts or out-of-school youth need our attention too.

[Teach for all](#) is an international movement that already exists in 36 countries and should be implemented in numerous other rich and poor countries that face both different and similar education-related problems. Quality education is needed everywhere, from New-York to Mumbai and Săcele, and other small cities and villages in Romania where educators from **Teach for Romania** (the Romanian branch of *Teach for all*) teach their pupils English, Arts and other subjects, and above everything, motivate them into finding out what future they want and why school is important in their endeavours.

According to the World Development Indicators, **the Gross Enrollment Rate** (GER) at the primary level in **Romania** reached 94.2 percent in 2012 (GER measures the total enrollment in primary education divided by the population size of primary-school-aged children, including here older persons attending primary school). However, despite the fact that these numbers should make us optimistic about the situation of primary education in Romania, the 17.5 percent rate of school dropouts in Romania in 2013 also deserves warrant attention. In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that the first



cause of school dropouts in Romania remains poverty.

While almost every school teacher in Romania dreams at working in comfortable and modern environments, teachers from **Teach for Romania** have committed themselves to the most troubled and less appreciated schools. The first generation of teachers (*teachies*) have been selected for a 2 years mandate to literally serve the nation. They left behind their fast-paced lives in corporations, offices and universities to go to small villages, impoverished cities and neighborhoods to teach, motivate, break stereotypes and perform a gradual change in the minds of pupils living on the edge of poverty. To be a teacher in Romania is neither very popular, nor financially attractive; therefore, being part of this program asks for motivation, strong leadership skills and enthusiasm. Moreover, teachers involved in the program should believe in the power of education and make a goal out of reducing education inequity in Romania.

Teach for Romania educators have been recruited based on a highly selective procedure and afterwards, they have been part of very demanding training sessions which prepared them for the school work in impoverished environments.

Fully integrated into the school team of their institutions, the 18 *teachies* just started their work in many schools all over Romania.

Interviewing **Ms Corina Puiu, co-founder and Head of Training and Support at Teach for Romania**, we found out that she gave up an important position within Vodafone Romania (as the one leading the project 'Vodafone Mobile Payments') and put all her professional experience and personal motivation into the idea of bringing **Teach for All** in Romania.

**Alexandra:** Corina, how did Teach for Romania started in

## Romania?



*Corina:* “Teach for all” is a global, but country-specific program that exists in 36 countries around the world, from the United States of America to India and Bulgaria.

In 2012, John (Ionut) Soleanicov was back in Romania after graduating from Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School of Government and living for many years abroad.

In Bulgaria, he met by chance Ms Evgenia Peeva, the founder of [Teach for Bulgaria](#) and realized that such an initiative should exist in Romania as well. At that time, I was in charge of Vodafone Mobile Payments within Vodafone Romania. When Ionut told me about the idea of Teach for Romania, this related a lot to my childhood back in Vaslui (where I was born) and Constanța (where I spent my childhood and my school years until university) and I committed myself to a project that, at that moment, was not sure to be approved by the Romanian Ministry of Education. Since then, we have been the co-founders of Teach for Romania. A couple of years ago, Bogdan Georgescu tried to implement it, but it was refused by the Romanian authorities at that time. However, in 2013, our plan was approved by the Ministry of Education and since then, we have concentrated all our efforts in having the first generation of teachers start their activity by September 2014. I believed in this idea from the beginning and now I am very excited about the way it grows and brings its first results.



**Alexandra:** Can you offer us a general profile picture of the ones involved in Teach for Romania in terms of academic and professional experiences and personal motivation?

**Corina:** Surprisingly enough, we received 362 applications from individuals with different profiles willing to get involved in the 2-years mandate of teaching in troubled schools and environments in Romania. After interviews and group exercises, we selected 23 teachers and 18 of them already started their activity in several schools in Romania. We were looking for highly motivated professionals, with a passion for education and willingness to challenge themselves working in primary schools in areas where teaching positions were not at all desired by other also very highly qualified teachers. The preparation sessions that took place during the **Leadership Summer Academy (LSA)**, a couple of weeks before the start of the academic year, have been a test of endurance, patience and ability to face unusual school-related situations. LSA was conceived as the largest hub for leadership and pedagogy in Romania with 300 participants, including 200 children and around 100 trainers, facilitators and teachers. It was a first important step towards preparing our selected Teachers for Romania for their 2 years activity in schools.

The program started in September 2014 when 18 of our recruits were assigned in schools. They teach English, Romanian, Latin, Drawing and Arts, Mathematics and other subjects and try their best to meet the needs of their pupils. Therefore, they have the huge potential to bring tremendous influence on the lives

of the children they work with every day for two years in a row. And at the same time, this experience is completely transformational for them as well. They are not volunteers in the program and we support them financially through our scholarship program. Moreover, after the 2 years mandate, they become part of an alumni systemic-change network that looks quite promising already.

**Alexandra: Can the idea of Teach for Romania bring innovation and change in the education system in Romania and open up new opportunities for the children involved in this project?**

*Corina:* I would like to see the next generation of leaders of Romania coming from these children we have met while implementing Teach for Romania in rural and urban Romania.

Teach for Romania is part of the formal education system and we are committed to change and innovation. However, reality proves us that while students may be entering primary school, they are not always completing the cycle. And one of the first reasons why they abandon their studies is poverty. Thus, for the moment our hopes go to these children who are on the verge of leaving school with low credentials and qualifications and thus, with no future prospects. While we believe that a good start in life is highly dependent on education, they should also give credit to school and education in general. In low-income urban and rural areas, teachers' efforts are going in this direction as well. According to 2012 PISA assessment, Romanian students are the less motivated ones from 65 countries involved in the research.

In these environments, motivation and willingness to fulfil studies and look for a better future are tremendously needed. Our aims for social justice and social efficiency go together with education quality. On the long term, we look forward to reducing education inequities that separate low-income students from their more privileged peers; moreover, we try to

motivate teachers to bring not only knowledge, but also motivation and role-models in their classrooms. Moreover, while being a teacher in Romania is not a dream job, I hope that teaching for Romania is more than that.

In the US and other countries with a longer tradition in this program, it already exists a Teach for Alumni network that works very well there. Many of these Alumni decide to continue their teaching activities in low-income communities or go for other education-related positions. Step by step, they do not only understand the needs and problems of the system that have to be tackled at the moment, but they also look forward to bring change and innovation from their new positions. I hope that our generations of **Teach for Romania** professionals will form the network of leadership and advocacy that is very much needed in the education system.

**Sabina Pop, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher in Gârcini,** gave us her opinion regarding her experience as a **Teacher for Romania.**

*The reason why I joined Teach for Romania is that one of my values includes having an impact in the world I live in. In time, I realized that the only way to do so is by starting teaching and educating young people. I believe that education is the foundation of society and if we want to change generations, we have to help youngsters build inner confidence and facilitate learning experiences where they can realize how many life options they can have if they are motivated enough.*

*When I found out about Teach for Romania I knew, just by "scanning" the website, that I found the people who share the same vision I have for this beautiful country we live in and for our fellow citizens. I applied for the open position and, as they saw my motivation and determination, became a Teach for Romania teacher.*

*It is not easy at all. Teaching in Gârcini is the toughest experience I've ever been through. The reality struck me, even*

though we were prepared for it in the Leadership Summer Academy that took place just kilometers away, in Tarlungeni. The pupils I'm teaching are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 90% of them still have to learn the letters. Half of them are too old to be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. They cannot do basic math problems, nor read or write. Their families are not supportive at all and they are all dependent on social supplements and monthly allowances.

Nevertheless, I am here (in Gârcini) because I do believe in them. I believe in the power of example and, most of all, in the power of a 'healthy' education – one in which the student is always encouraged to trust himself or herself, develop critical thinking skills, be curious about the world and motivated to learn more. I don't have a lot of teaching experience myself, but I am learning a lot every day. I am trying to educate them, so they become motivated to be someone when they grow up – a person who has a well-paid job, who is satisfied with his/her family's life and who is always willing to give support to the people in the community where he or she lives in. This is my vision for my pupils and I put all the efforts to help them achieve their best.

My greatest achievement so far is the one related to the management of violence in my classroom. Children who exhibit violent or aggressive behavior at school are a great challenge for the school personnel. I used to have at least five or six very violent students in my class who would always hit and spit each other. Since I never hit them, always encouraged them to reflect on their behavior and used the power of example, after only two months, I don't have this problem anymore. I have to be honest and say that I am still surprised, but very happy we have come so far in such a short period of time. The same situation has occurred during the Leadership Summer Academy; at that time, we had to deal with some noncompliant and violent behaviors exhibited by some pupils we worked with in Tarlungeni. We are still in touch

*with these kids and it is wonderful to see that they improved their behavior after we left their school.*

*In a nutshell, my greatest objectives for this school year (2014/2015) concern improving my pupils' reading and writing abilities. These are ambitious goals since we have to learn in one year what other students used to achieve in three years; however, I am confident that all the teaching methods and strategies I have learned during the Leadership Summer Academy together with my strong motivation to succeed in our project, will help us check out our accomplishments quite soon.*