

The official development assistance (ODA) in Romania. What's in a word?

As one of the most important global players in the field of development with more than 160 country offices around the world, [UNDP](#) acknowledges the growing role of the middle income countries as emerging new donors. In the context of post-2015 agenda, the Busan conference (2011) highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation in the field of development and the increasing role of MICs, both as ODA recipients and donors.

In order to find out more on this topic, we interviewed **Ms Anca Stoica** who works for the UNDP Regional Center for Europe and Central Asia, serving as **Romanian ODA Project Manager**.

Alexandra: The UNDP has been in Romania for over 40 years now. Anca, what are the main development areas in which the UNDP has played an important role in this country?

Anca: That is correct, the UNDP established a Country Office in Bucharest 42 years ago, in 1972, and it was actually the first UNDP office to function in a former Warsaw Pact state. That was nearly two decades before other offices opened in neighboring countries. After Romania's 1989 Revolution, UNDP assumed a dynamic role as a partner of the Government and civil society. For over 25 years, it has identified gaps and areas of vulnerability in human development, it has demonstrated local solutions to these challenges, and has helped integrate strategies in government programmes.

From the beginning, the UNDP country programmes had focused on assisting Romania to establish national capacities in three core areas: strengthening democratic governance, reducing poverty and deepening social inclusion, and protecting the environment. Our main objective has been to align the country

programmes to Romania's national priorities linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and EU integration, and at the same time to stay close to the UNDP corporate priorities of fighting poverty, protecting the environment and building democratic societies.

In fighting poverty and deepening social inclusion in Romania, for instance, the UNDP has implemented programmes that tackled the social inclusion of Roma citizens, the challenges faced by people with disabilities, young people leaving institutional care, women and other potentially disadvantaged groups. These measures have helped to address labor market imbalances, reduce the impact of economic downturn and build civic activism. To protect the environment, the UNDP has critically contributed to improvements in national laws, practices and strategies on issues concerning biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and energy efficiency. Cross-border measures have been geared towards expanding sub-regional cooperation in managing natural resources. Also, in deepening democratic governance, the UNDP has helped Romania to strengthen an independent and effective judicial and administrative system properly equipped for fighting corruption, so necessary for sound public finances and well rooted socio-economic development. It has also supported institutions like the Permanent Electoral Authority, to develop its capacities to organize independent, free and fair elections for Romania.

Alexandra: The UNDP has taken a leading role in local coordination efforts of advocacy, monitoring and implementation of MDGs. Taking into account your professional experience within the UNDP, can you describe UNDP's role in supporting new ODA donors (such as Romania since its integration in the EU) in their efforts of tackling the MDGs?

Anca: Interest in Official Development Assistance (ODA) has increased drastically over the last 15 years and this has been largely generated by the international attention towards the

MDGs. The UN Millennium Declaration had explicitly recognized the role of ODA in the development process and stated that a substantial increase in ODA, among others, is greatly needed to achieve the MDGs. In this context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has a formal mandate to help turn into reality the “Global Partnership for Development Cooperation” agreed upon in Busan and the MDG 8. It also assumed a big role in promoting development cooperation between emerging donor countries and recipient countries and in strengthening the new ODA donors’ capacities to effectively deliver development assistance. Moreover, the UNDP is an important partner for and facilitator of transition experience sharing and South-South development cooperation, providing structures and frameworks for innovative partnerships such as triangular initiatives.

Alexandra: How would you evaluate the implication and support of UNDP Romania in strengthening the capacity of local NGOs in implementing ODA projects and programs?

Anca: Legislation shortcomings in Romania are preventing the MFA in granting ODA funds directly to civil society organizations. This is the main reason for which our organization had to step in and help the MFA channel the funds through the UNDP programme frameworks. However, this context has enabled us to strengthen the partnership and work with NGOs and to support their capacity building efforts along the way. We have involved NGO partners in most of the UNDP capacity building initiatives, we have boosted the use of results based management at a larger scale in Romania and we have used our UNDP network of country offices and regional centers to support and facilitate the Romanian NGOs’ transition experience sharing with civil society in our ODA partner countries.

Alexandra: Drawing from the UNDP’s experience in leveraging its core competencies for the achievement of MDGs, which are the lessons learnt for the international development agenda

after 2015?

Anca: First of all, we should stress once more that the implementation of the MDGs is still fundamental, despite the significant progress that has been achieved so far. The MDGs have proven to be a very powerful instrument in creating a shared global vision and development framework to address poverty and advance human development. Nevertheless, their implementation has generated during the last 15 years important lessons for the international community. For instance, the MDGs did not really have a focus on good governance issues, thus failing to tackle important areas of development such as the fight against corruption and public service delivery which are important enablers of poverty reduction efforts. Also, the MDGs did not adequately address issues of social protection, inequalities and complexities related to demographic dynamics, peace and security and human rights. Nor did they consider the vulnerability to natural hazards or to other external shocks which has caused setbacks in MDG achievements overall. But all these lessons seem to have been well learned by the international community that is now more committed than ever to fix remaining challenges within the new framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Anca Stoica, the Romanian ODA Project Manager, is responsible for the implementation of the New ODA Cooperation Partnership with Romania, providing overall technical support to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the development assistance project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, she provides partnership and project development services in view of supporting Romania's South-South cooperation efforts and its contribution to the global development cooperation scene. Anca joined the UNDP in 2007, having previously worked for the UNDP Romania Country Office as a Programme Manager for the Democratic Governance Portfolio. In this position she has contributed to the build

up and implementation of two UNDP Country Programmes in Romania by providing strategic advice, conducting analysis of the development situation, designing concept notes/projects and mobilizing financial resources for the successful delivery of developmental results. Anca's experience in project management spans a diversity of thematic areas, from development cooperation and electoral assistance to public administration and rule of law. She holds a B.A in Political Science at the University of Bucharest and a Master Degree in Political Science and International Relations at the same university.