

USAID/Romania
Strategic Objectives 2.3 and 2.1 Close-Out Report

SO 2.3: Improved Democratic Governance (FY 2002-2007)
SO 2.1: Better Informed Citizens (FY 1998-2001)

USAID Cost: \$93,801,000 of which

SEED = \$91,943,000

ESF = \$ 1,858,000

1. Principal partners:

a. American

- American Bar Association/Central East European Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI)
- ARD Inc
- Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI)
- PADCO
- Chemonics International
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI)
- International Republican Institute (IRI)
- International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
- World Learning for International Development
- Management Systems International (MSI)
- Academy for Educational Development (AED)
- EMI Systems
- Georgia State University
- Sister Cities International
- TCG International
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)
- Freedom House
- International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)

b. Romanian

- Office of the President of Romania
- Center of Studies and Programs for Development (CSPD)
- Association of Community Relations (ARC)
- Center for Independent Journalism
- Pro Democracy Association (APD)
- Romanian Orthodox Church
- Center for Independent Journalism (CJI)
- Resource Center for Public Participation (CeRe)
- Federation of Local Authorities of Romania (FALR)
- Commune Councils throughout Romania

- City Halls of Bacau, Baia Mare, Brasov, Cluj, Galati, Iasi, Oradea, Ptiesti, Ploiesti, and Targu-Neamt
- County Councils of Ialomita and Subiu

c. Other

- Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD)
- Berman Group
- IGE Consulting
- European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

2. Summary of overall impact of assistance at the SO and IR levels:

Significant results were achieved, during the life of SO 2.3, in local democratic governance. Citizens became more actively engaged in making decisions that affected their daily lives; officials became more accountable to their constituents for their actions; NGOs were tapped to help with service delivery; infrastructure improved; and economic development accelerated. Democratic processes now take place more effectively and regularly within and amongst organizations participating in community life. Moreover, these results have been noted throughout the country: citizens of more than 200 communities across Romania benefited from USAID assistance, while more than 150 local and national NGOs embody USAID's legacy in Romanian civil society.

The first IR, *Adequately funded, service-oriented local government units*, encompassed the achievements made in local governance. Our programs helped to develop sound democratic practices, to promote transparency, and help citizens gain a voice in their government. The Government of Romania (GOR) adopted laws and regulations ensuring effective functioning of local governments, and local authority associations effectively lobbied for genuine local autonomy. These associations are now acting as effective promoters of local government reforms.

The second IR, *Improved interaction between citizens and local public institutions*, addressed civil society, the political process, and the rule of law. Civil society assistance helped to create public policy NGOs and coalitions that increased their local constituencies, engaged in advocacy and public policy development, and monitored the transparency and accountability of local and central authorities.

Political process assistance promoted democratic processes within the major political parties in Romania, and helped these parties adequately address issues of concern to ordinary citizens.

Rule of law assistance strengthened judicial independence and integrity, and laid the legislative groundwork to assist victims of domestic violence.

3. Changes in the results framework:

When the new strategy was developed in 2001, SO 2.1 became an IR for SO 2.3. During the life of the strategies, targets of the SO and IRs were revised, to reflect the rapid changes in the governance environment and reductions of the USG assistance budget.

4. Summary of principal projects and their results:

USAID assistance to reform local governance focused on improving local authorities' abilities to effectively and efficiently provide public services to citizens. Our programs helped develop sound governance practices, refine the legislative framework to ensure financial autonomy, and create local government associations. These measures were put into place with an eye toward sustainability, so that local governments would continue to pursue reforms without further support from USAID.

During 1997-2000, USAID piloted a community facilitation program to help poor, rural communities define local concerns and advocate for their resolution in collaboration with public authorities. The program trained the first eighteen Romanian community facilitators, helped create the Romanian Association for Community Development, and leveraged a \$20 million World Bank loan for the creation of the Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF). Thirteen communities received RSDF funding with USAID's assistance.

In May 2000, USAID began to support partnerships between Romanian and American not-for-profit organizations. This initiative launched 28 U.S.-Romanian partnerships, which enhanced civil society development and helped integrate Romania into the larger European community. American fund-raising techniques, attitudes, and positive "can-do" values were transmitted through these partnerships. As a result, local NGOs were able to forge closer relationships with their communities. Moreover, they improved their prospects for longer-term financial viability.

Since 2005, our activities focused on helping public policy and watchdog organizations strengthen their sustainability, improve their advocacy and outreach, and establish partnerships with businesses and the GOR. More than 50 NGOs designed and implemented long-term strategies for the development of their organizations, while addressing issues such as the accountability of local and national politicians, citizens' participation in local decisions, fund raising, media responsibility, health reform, domestic violence, physical access for the disabled, the rights of people with mental disabilities, access of Roma and the disabled to education, labor market integration of the disabled, corporate social responsibility, and community resource mobilization.

Our civil society assistance also helped improve the legal and funding environment for NGOs, tackling issues such as NGO registration, public utility status, government funding for NGOs, individual and corporate giving (2 percent law), access to European Union (EU) structural funds, and promotion of social enterprises.

During 2002-2007, the political process program strengthened the internal capacity of political parties to respond to citizens' needs, to promote greater citizen political participation, and to encourage women political, civic, and business leaders to take an active role in national and local policy-setting. The program trained approximately 1,200 emerging leaders throughout Romania

to assist political parties in achieving internal democratic reform and build local capacity to reach out to civil society on issues of systemic reform. Our assistance enabled political leaders to represent the interests of citizens through political engagement on an issue-by-issue basis. It also helped render party decisions in a more decentralized and transparent way, and ensured that civil society formed an integral part of the policy process.

Our assistance in constituent outreach took a major step by developing the guidebook *Best Practice in Constituent Relations: A Guide for MPs and Parliamentary Staff*, as well as constituent case tracking software. These will serve as “how-to” guides for MPs and their staff and will help smaller offices keep track of and expedite constituent requests.

During 2000-2005, rule of law activities focused on improving judicial processes, advancing professional standards in the justice system, and promoting systemic justice reforms. USAID helped the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) develop, test, and implement new streamlined procedures in Bucharest’s 3rd sector first instance court, and funded the development and testing of random case assignment software. The new law on judicial organization adopted in 2004 included implementing this software. USAID also assisted the MOJ and the Superior Council of Magistracy to develop ethics codes for judges and prosecutors (adopted in 2001 and revised in 2005) and for court clerks (adopted in 2005).

Since 2005, USAID focused on improving the legal framework pertaining to domestic violence and victim assistance. A new draft law on domestic violence was developed in cooperation with the National Coalition to Combat Domestic Violence, the National Agency for Family Protection, and the Ministry of Justice. The draft was submitted to the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Equal Opportunities in July 2006. We also worked with judges to increase their awareness of domestic violence issues and their understanding of the responsibilities they have in implementing the laws.

During the last nine months of the SO, USAID developed models of handling family cases in Romanian courts and provided recommendations to the GOR for long-term policy and institutional reforms.

5. Success stories

Local Government:

- 1. [A Telecenter Saves a Young Life](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_ro_ciobanu.html) - 10/05
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_ro_ciobanu.html
- 2. [Romanian Municipality Plan Capital Investments](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_giurgiu.html) - 01/05
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_giurgiu.html
- 3. [Community Centers Find New Purpose in Romania](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_center.html) - 08/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_center.html
- 4. [Citizens Request Transparent Local Government](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_citizens.htm) - 08/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_citizens.htm
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- 5. [Helping Housing Efforts In Romania](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/cs_romania_house.html) - 06/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/cs_romania_house.html
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- 6. [Local Government Creates Landmark Partnership](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_metro.html) - 04/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_metro.html
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- 7. [Democratic Process Yields Results in Romania](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_citizen.html) -03/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_citizen.html
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- 8. [Empowering Citizens To Improve Their Community](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_sanitation.html) - 03/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_romania_sanitation.html
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- 9. [USAID Taught Us To Identify Our Problems](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_mayor.html) - 01/04
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/fp_romania_mayor.html

Rule of Law:

- 1. [Law Experts Support Continued Reform](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_ro_training.html) - 06/06
at http://www.usaid.gov/stories/romania/ss_ro_training.html

6. Prospects for the future:

After several years of democracy programs, USAID has a sound legacy in democratic reform. Through grants and training in advocacy, strategic plans and sound management principles, we have imparted skills to Romanian NGOs that will ensure their sustainability. We also leave behind a series of seven publications on critical organizational development topics. In addition, we have helped establish two legacy organizations, the Resource Center for Public Participation and Partners for Democracy and Development, which will continue to support Romanian NGOs and facilitate development of public policies with citizen input.

The main challenge for NGOs in the coming years is to increase their access to domestic funding from the government as well as from individuals and businesses. Financial resources will continue to be critical especially for civic organizations, given the EU's lack of flexibility and openness to fund activities which relate to NGOs performing watchdog functions and acting as monitors of government actions rather than being "social entrepreneurs."

7. Lessons learned for other programs

Keep assistance programs as simple and streamlined as possible. Do not try to design and implement complex programs that target several diverse categories of beneficiaries simultaneously.

Involve beneficiaries and counterparts in program design; consult them often and meaningfully during implementation; incorporate feedback and adjust program implementation when needed. Sustainability should be integrated into programs early on, with sufficient time allowed for achieving impact.

As regards local government activities, if you have to choose between contract and cooperative agreement, always use the former as the implementation instrument.

8. Performance indicators and their usefulness for performance management:

Strategic Objective 2.3: Improved democratic governance at the local level

Indicator (1): Number of NGOs participating in policy coalitions for the first time

Comments: Work in coalitions allows NGOs to better follow through on advocacy initiatives efforts all the way to monitoring the actual impact on citizens of changes brought about by advocacy efforts. The indicator examines coalition structure, function, leadership, plan quality, or other factors. Information is extracted from the grantees' quarterly reports.

Indicator (2): Number of policy initiatives pursued by assisted NGOs

Comments: By increased public participation in advocacy campaigns of local NGOs/CSOs, a larger number of policy initiatives were supported by the general public and brought to successful conclusion, that brought more responsive, open and responsible governance at the local level.

Intermediate Result 2.3.1: Adequately funded, service oriented local government units (LGUs)

Indicator (1): Number of units executing loans for public improvements

Comments: The willingness of lenders to provide financing requires an independent assessment of the quality of municipal management, and the successful execution of a loan for public improvements is therefore a testament to the quality of local government management.

Indicator (2): Number of best practices disseminated

Comments: Dissemination of best practices represents a completed, implemented and functional improvement that has demonstrated itself and is therefore suitable for adoption in other cities. Progress toward completion of each such system is regularly reported, and its dissemination as a complete system is reported.

Intermediate Result 2.3.2: Improved interaction between citizens' and local public institutions

Indicator (1): Number of new public – NGO/CSO partnerships in local communities

Comments: The decentralization process created new roles for both NGOs and local public institutions which required acceptance of new responsibilities and implementing initiatives which were better achieved by being dealt with through local partnership initiatives.

Indicator (2): Percent increase in volunteer support of target NGOs programs

Comments: The degree of citizens' voluntary support for NGOs' programs is an expression of an improved interaction between citizens' and local public institutions. The indicator is easily measured and at affordable cost with data being gathered through routine procedures employed in the regular monitoring of grantee project implementation.

9. Evaluations and special studies:

Democracy and Governance Assessment of Romania, September 24, 2001

Building and Managing Partnerships – Lessons Learned from the Romanian-American Sustainable Partnerships Program (RASP), March 2, 2004

Roma Programs Financed by the USG in Romania: A Study of Best Practices and Lessons Learned, May 2007

Civil Society Programs Financed by the USG in Romania: A Study of Best Practices and Lessons Learned, November 2007

All these reports and other studies are available at <http://dec.usaid.gov>.

10. Final reports of contracts, grants; and cooperative agreements:

The results of the activities supporting Romania's governance programs were captured in the Results Report and Resource Request documents developed between 1999- 2001 and the Annual Reports developed between 2002- 2006. These reports and the final reports of all projects are on file with CDIE in USAID/Washington at <http://dec.usaid.gov>.

11. Contact information for partners:

a. U.S.

- Academy for Educational Development (AED) - www.aed.org
- American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) – www.abanet.org/ceeli
- Associates in Rural Development (ARD) – www.ardinc.com
- DemNet – www.demnet.net
- Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) – www.dai.com
- EMI Systems – www.emisystems.com
- Georgia State University – www.gsu.edu
- International Republican Institute (IRI) – www.iri.org
- Management Systems International (MSI) – www.msiworldwide.com
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) – www.ndi.org
- Planning and Development Collaborative International (PADCO) - www.padco.aecom.com
- The QED Group – www.qedgrouppllc.com
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI) – www.rti.org
- Sister Cities International - www.sister-cities.org
- TCG International – www.tcgi.com
- World Learning for International Development – www.worldlearning.org

b. Romanian

- Center of Studies and Programs for Development (CSPD) - www.cspd.ro
- Center for Independent Journalism (CJI) - www.ijf-cij.org
- Pro Democracy Association (APD)- www.apd.ro
- Federation of Local Authorities of Romania (FALR) - www.falr.ro

c. Other

- Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (FSLD) - www.frdl.org.pl

- Berman Group - www.bermgrp.com
- IGE Consulting - www.igeconsulting.com
- European Center for Not-for-Profit Law - www.ecnl.org