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INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Romanian Development Camp 2008-2014

UNDP Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia / 29 August 2014

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DevCamp – Romanian Development Camp

FOND – Federatia Organizatiilor Neguvernamentale pentru Dezvoltare din Romania/ The Romanian Non-Governmental Development Organisations Federation

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NGDO – Non-governmental Development Organisation

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SNIECODA - Strengthening the National Institutional and Education capacity to carry out ODA programs/project

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNEG – United Nations Evaluation Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Romanian Development Camp is an annual event initiated in 2008, which brings together representatives of all major Romanian stakeholders in the ODA field and international development practitioners in a 3-day training and experience sharing exercise. The purpose of this project is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of Romanian ODA stakeholders to design and implement ODA project and programmes.

This internal evaluation is intended to assess the design, relevance, performance (efficiency, effectiveness), and achievements of the Romanian Development Camp (2008-2014 editions) in the context of Romania's developing ODA field. The report was prepared by a member of the Romanian ODA Project Unit from the UNDP Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and is based on desk research, one on-line questionnaire and in-depth interviews with representatives of the most important project stakeholders. The current report is not an impact evaluation, but a project evaluation, focusing on the achievement of its outputs, rather than its long-term implications. The evaluation identifies a number of lessons learned and proposes a number of recommendations that project partners and the MFA may use in the design and implementation of future editions.

The report touches upon the following evaluation criteria:

- a) **Relevance of the project** – evaluating the extent to which the evolving format and content of the project meets various stakeholders' needs and interests;
- b) **Effectiveness** of project implementation – the extent to which the project has met its objectives;
- c) **Efficiency** - the extent to which the available resources were used in an efficient and transparent manner;
- d) **Sustainability** of results – the extent to which the effects of this project are resilient and the mechanisms which support the durability of results;

Each evaluation criteria is assessed on a four-point scale – Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory – based on the OECD Scale of Evaluation Findings.

Overall, the project is assessed as being **highly satisfactory**, fulfilling to a high extent the needs and expectations of its stakeholders in an inclusive event that is organised in a transparent, participative and cost-effective manner.

The rating for the **relevance** criteria is **highly satisfactory**. Throughout the last seven years, the organisers adapted successfully the focus of the Development Camp so as to respond to the evolution of the ODA field in Romania and to the changing capacity building needs of its beneficiaries. The common denominator between all stakeholders and across editions remains the fact that the Development Camp offers the most inclusive setting where Romanian development practitioners and other concerned stakeholders come together in a format that is conducive to open and informal dialogue. The Development Camp is the only event of its kind in Romania and has become a point of reference on the Romanian development agenda, based on its regularity and predictability. All interviewed stakeholders expressed their strong support for the continuation of the project.

The rating for the **effectiveness** criteria is **satisfactory**. The annual evaluation reports and the data gathered from the interviews conducted for this report have shown that most participants have benefited professionally from all

Development Camp editions, and that the information presented was relevant and substantial. However, the project design needs to be amended so as to facilitate a substantial dialogue between stakeholders, meaningful policy input and a real and sustainable community building exercise.

The rating for the **effectiveness** criteria is **highly satisfactory**. The sums allocated for this project are justifiable, considering the size of the event (number of participants, number of days) and as compared to other similar projects. The financial allocation for this project was transparent and widely shared with the large public.

The rating for the **sustainability** is **satisfactory**. The institutional infrastructure required for the continuity of the event is stable at this point as FOND developed increased capacities to implement the Romanian Development Camp, in close partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From a financial point of view, the sustainability of this project is hindered by the legislative limitations which dictate an unsuitable financing modality.

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| relevance | Highly satisfactory |
| effectiveness | Satisfactory |
| efficiency | Highly satisfactory |
| sustainability | Satisfactory |



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INTRODUCTION

OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION – THE ROMANIAN DEVELOPMENT CAMP

The Romanian Development Camp is an annual project initiated in 2008, in the context of Romania's newly acquired status of official development assistance provider. The event brings together representatives of all major Romanian stakeholders in the ODA field and international development practitioners. The project was designed as a national scale capacity building exercise, with the over-arching objective to strengthen the institutional and administrative capacity of ODA national stakeholders to carry out ODA programmes and projects, in close cooperation with Romanian ODA partner countries and other European/international actors, according to the National Strategy of Cooperation for Development. The Romania Development Camp aims to create each year an open space for networking and discussion on emerging European and global development trends, to facilitate the exchange of best practices and know-how between the most active development stakeholders in Romania and to facilitate open, inclusive consultations between policy makers and the civil society in the field of international development cooperation. The event has been a substantial networking and learning opportunity for the Romanian development sector, as it includes resource persons from various international organizations, representatives of other donors – both emerging and traditional-, international NGOs and NGO platforms concerned with development.

Since 2007, the cooperation for development field in Romania has evolved significantly, as new legislation, instruments and working modalities have been established and new actors have emerged in the field, while the existing bodies consolidated their capacities. Consequently, the scope and focus of the Development Camp have changed during the last seven years, reflecting the evolving needs and interests of the major development stakeholders in Romania. Initially, the Development Camp had a strong international component with a wide international presence especially from experienced donors and a clear focus on learning, . For instance, the 2008 edition benefitted from the expertise of development practitioners from Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and France, in an intense capacity building exercise, which familiarized the Romanian development stakeholders with key concepts and approaches in the international development field. In later editions, the event became a more reflexive exercise, bringing together participants and speakers mainly from the emerging donor states and Romania. For example, the 4th edition of the Development Camp which focused on “New EU Donor Countries” included representatives from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. The last three editions focused on the evolution of the Romanian ODA sector and brought under discussion Romania's priorities, strategies, approaches as a development actor, creating an open space for consultation and negotiation.

The Romanian Development Camp is addressed to the entire development community in Romania, including representatives from NGOs, academia, the media, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concerned line ministries and public authorities, members of the Parliament, international organizations and the business sector. As such, the event is the most comprehensive gathering of interested stakeholders in the field of development cooperation in Romania.

The first two editions of the event (September 2008 and September 2009) were organized and implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with UNDP Romania, under the project “Strengthening the National Institutional and Education capacity to carry out ODA programs/projects (SNIECODA)”. Starting with 2009, the

Romanian Development Camp was implemented by the Romanian NGDO platform – FOND in partnership with UNDP – which ensured monitoring and support functions- and the Romanian MFA under the projects “Capacity Building of the Romanian NGOs for Implementing ODA Projects and Programmes” I, II and III. The switch aimed at further contributing to the objective of developing the capacities of the Romanian civil society to implement ODA and development education projects and programs and increased the national ownership of this annual event. The 2013 and 2014 editions were implemented by FOND in cooperation with the MFA and the UNDP Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, financed through the annual ODA grants competition. All Development Camp editions have been financed entirely by the Romanian MFA, through the Official Development Assistance budget of the Romanian Government.

EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is intended to assess the design, relevance, performance (efficiency, effectiveness), and achievements of the Romanian Development Camp (2008-2014 editions) in the context of Romania’s developing ODA field. The evaluation should look into the evolution of the project during the last 7 years, assessing the expectations and results as perceived by the various stakeholders involved in the project. The current evaluation identifies a number of lessons learned and proposes a number of recommendations that project partners and the MFA may use in the design and implementation of future editions.

This report assesses the following evaluation criteria:

- e) **Relevance of the project** – evaluating the extent to which the evolving format and content of the project meets various stakeholders’ needs and interests;
- f) **Effectiveness** of project implementation – the extent to which the project has met its objectives;
- g) **Efficiency** - the extent to which the available resources were used in an efficient and transparent manner;
- h) **Sustainability** of results – the extent to which the effects of this project are resilient and the mechanisms which support the durability of results;

The current report is not an impact evaluation, but a project evaluation, focusing on the achievement of outputs, rather than long-term implications of its implementation. However, the report will briefly touch upon the long-term effects of this project, based on the information gathered from consultations with various stakeholders.

The evaluation criteria mentioned above were assessed using the following rating categories: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory, followed by an explanation of the rating. This four-point rating system is in line with international standards and was adopted from the OECD Scale of Evaluation Findings,

introduced in the manual “Assessing the Development Effectiveness of Multilateral Organizations: Guidance on the Methodological Approach”, rev. June 2012, published by OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation¹:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| highly satisfactory | the project had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives |
| satisfactory | there were only minor shortcomings |
| marginally satisfactory | the project had significant shortcomings |
| unsatisfactory | there were major shortcomings in the achievement of the project objectives |

METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

The quantitative and qualitative data provided in the evaluation is based on the following methodology:

- Desk review of all relevant project documentation including project documents, project proposals, agendas, lists of participants, post-event reports, progress reports and any other relevant documents.
- In depth interviews to gather primary data from key stakeholders (relevant representatives of the Romanian MFA, FOND, participating NGOs, academics and other relevant stakeholders – please see the complete list in Annex XXXX) using a well-structured methodology.
- One on-line questionnaire that was sent to all participants of all 7 Development Camp editions.²

The methodology for this evaluation is based on the Terms of Reference developed by the UNDP (available in Annex 1), and the UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System comprising the respective Code of Conduct and the Ethical Guidelines.

This document is an internal evaluation, conducted by a member of the Romanian ODA UNDP Europe and Central Asia team.

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/50540172.pdf>

² <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pNTPLtRkAQgivHQdt10Y4lghRIUHi1oP1N5U-Hm3Mbk/edit>



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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. PROJECT RELEVANCE

This section of the report will analyse the extent to which the evolving format and content of the project meets various stakeholders' needs and interests, taking into consideration the evolution of the stakeholders' expectations and will propose a series of recommendation to enhance the relevance of future events.

The consultations with representatives of the most relevant stakeholders engaged in the Romanian Development Camp revealed the fact that the event has been and is expected to remain highly relevant to the capacity building needs of all target groups³.

Depending on the target group, the project successfully served one or more of the following purposes:

- A networking opportunity – the project facilitated the communication between various stakeholders both at the national and international level;
- A community catalyst – the project contributed to the emergence and growth of a development community in Romania;
- An instrument for capacity building – the project was a learning environment which facilitated the consolidation of skills and the exchange of best-practices and knowhow between various development actors, both national and international;
- A channel for national dialogue and consultations – the project was a communication channel between decision makers and the civil society/academic sector;
- An environment for action – the project facilitated the development of projects and partnerships.

All interviewed stakeholders agreed that the Romanian Development Camp met in various extents all of the purposes above, but some preferences emerged depending on the particular profile and needs of each group. For example, the NGOs emerged as the net beneficiaries of this project, having the greatest interest and engagement in the event. For most NGOs, the Development Camp is relevant for providing an open networking and lobby opportunity, being one of the very few opportunities in which civil society representatives can discuss in an informal setting with the decision makers engaged in the ODA policy. For the academic sector, the event remains highly relevant, although, in recent editions, it lacked a module especially designed for this target group. Firstly, the Development Camp is a valuable opportunity for the academic sector to liaise with development professionals and to search for common ground in areas such as the skills and expertise required for the training of development practitioner (so as to calibrate the academic curricula to the requirements of the professional field). Also, the Development Camp offers the opportunity to search for project implementation partners and to test project ideas with other development stakeholders and is an important source for gathering information in the field of development assistance, which is rather scarce in Romania. For the MFA representatives, on the other hand, the Development Camp is above all an opportunity to ensure the transparency and accountability of all strategic decisions regarding the evolution of the Romanian ODA.

³ This observation is supported by the evaluation reports drafted after each session which show that after all editions (2008-2013, as the 2014 Evaluation Report is not complete at the time of this research) more than 70 % of the participants that submitted evaluation forms appreciated the quality of the event as very good or excellent; found the topics proposed on the agenda to be relevant or highly relevant to their needs and interests; considered that the information presented during the working sessions was very useful or useful.

The table below presents a brief overview of the most common arguments regarding the relevance of the Romanian Development Camp, as perceived by the most actively engaged stakeholders in the field of Romanian ODA.

The relevancy of the Romanian Development Camp according to the most actively engaged development stakeholders

| | |
|------------|---|
| NGO sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A networking opportunity – to find project partners, to meet resource persons, to meet their peers from Romania and other countries; • A community building experience – an opportunity to enhance the relationship with their peers in a more informal setting; • An channel for dialogue with decision makers – to present their priorities and lobby; • A capacity building instrument; |
| Academia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A source of information on the current state of affairs in the professional environment of development in Romania; • A source of information on the latest debates in the international development arena; • A networking opportunity – to search for common ground with the professional development environment; |
| Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A source of information on what is being done in the field of development in Romania; • An opportunity for networking – to create contacts in the professional development sector; |
| MFA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A space for national dialogue and a source of accountability; • A capacity building instrument – an opportunity to share best practices with other donors from the region; |

In 2008, the Romanian Development Camp emerged as a first attempt to map the most important Romanian stakeholders in the field of development and to bring them together in a learning and networking exercise, given the novelty of the area for the Romanian civil society and the public administration. Since then, the context of the Romanian ODA has changed significantly and the relevance and focus of the project have adapted accordingly. Initially, the event had a strong capacity building component, with a substantial international presence, which was meant to raise the local capacity. Later, beginning with 2011, the Romanian Development Camp started focusing more on the emerging donors region and developed a stronger national focus, accommodating dialogues on the status-quo and strategic positioning of the Romanian ODA. Until now, this project offered a limited opportunity for the creation of projects and partnerships, firstly because there are other settings that are especially designed for the purpose (such as the Black Sea NGO Forum) and also because DevCamp was tailored for a development sector that

had limited experience. But as the capacities and needs of the project beneficiaries evolve, the focus of the Development Camp could be readjusted so as to consider more its potential as a project incubator.

Based on the feedback collected by the organizers, the project was received as a model of good practices outside of Romania, both by the European Commission and by some of the other new EU donor countries, including Malta, Croatia, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Moreover, the Maltese and Croat MDGO platforms expressed their interest in organising similar events with their respective national stakeholders and approached FOND on the margins of recent Trialog regular partnership meetings with the informal request to share their experience in the organization of the Romanian Development Camp.

CONCLUSION:

The rating for the relevance criteria is **highly satisfactory**.

During the last seven editions, the organisers adapted successfully the focus of the Development Camp so as to respond to the evolution of the ODA field in Romania and to the changing capacity building needs of its beneficiaries. The common denominator between all stakeholders and across editions remains the fact that the Development Camp offers the most inclusive setting where Romanian development practitioners and other concerned stakeholders come together in a format that is conducive to open and informal dialogue. The Development Camp is the only event of its kind in Romania and has become a point of reference on the Romanian development agenda, based on its regularity and predictability. All interviewed stakeholders expressed their strong support for the continuation of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the interviews and desk review performed during this evaluation, the following recommendations emerged:

- The focus of the Romanian Development Camp should remain national - the event should be a reflexive exercise where the national development community meets to plan for the year ahead and reviews the achievements and lessons-learned of the previous one, to consult, to network, to create partnerships and test ideas, to develop skills and discuss the latest trends in international development. The Romanian development community and policy have evolved significantly in the last eight years so as to justify the need for an event focused primarily on the priorities of the national ODA sector.
- In order to enhance the community building exercise, the event should continue to be used as an opportunity to take stock of the latest developments in the Romanian ODA scene – the event should include presentations of the main actors implementing ODA projects, the results achieved by Romanian stakeholders in the field of ODA, in the previous year, the evolution of the national strategic and legislative framework, etcetera.
- With regard to the capacity building component, the Development Camp should continue to support the sharing of experience and best-practices with the emerging EU donors, in a horizontal dialogue considering

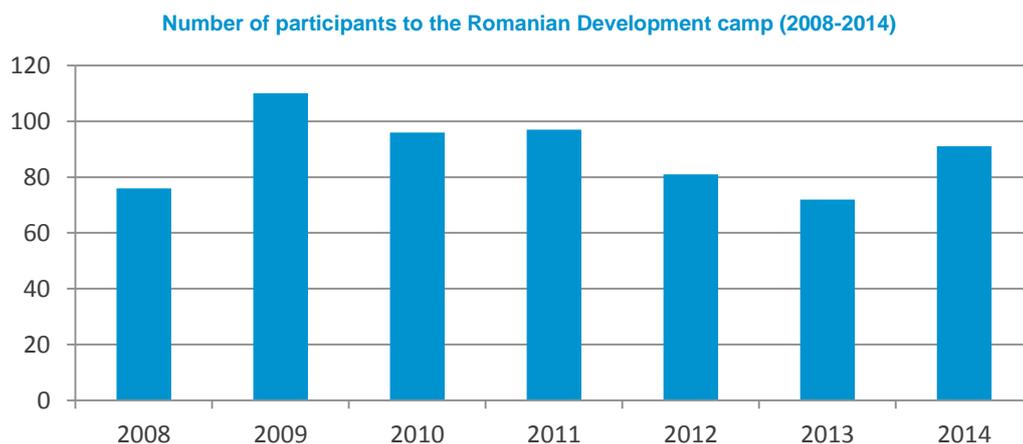
the specificities of the international development sector in this region. Experience sharing with traditional donors tends to be hindered by the inherent systemic differences (for example of capacity and focus) between old and new donors. In this context, given the emerging trend to foster aid efficiency and effectiveness of new donors through enhanced regional coordination, this event could offer the opportunity to operationalize this cooperation by providing an informal and open space for discussion.

- The main strengths of the project are the wide audience it appeals to and the inclusive dialogue environment it creates. In order to preserve this strength, the organizers should make sure that they continue communicating in a timely and inclusive manner about the event - it is important for example, that all NGOs (members and non-members of FOND alike), representatives of line ministries and other public institutions, members of the academic sector, and all other relevant target groups have access to extensive and timely information on the event;
- Although the participation among civil society representatives, the media and the MFA has remained constant, representatives of some other target groups – such as local authorities and other line ministries has been inconsistent. For example, with a few notable exceptions, individual representatives of line ministries attended one or two editions, due to the rapid rotation of personnel within public institutions. Moreover, not all relevant line ministries have been represented in all editions. It could be therefore useful for the organisers to set up a short briefing session for new participants that are not very familiar with basic concepts related to development cooperation, so as to better prepare them for an active participation throughout the duration of the event;
- The Romanian Development Camp should be better coordinated with other events organized nationally - such as Aid Review / Arcadia conferences / FOND events in order to 1) better prepare the participants' positions on the topics to be addressed through the Development Camp and to facilitate follow-up activities after the event 2) to present the findings/conclusions/deliverables of other events in the Development Camp. For example, Aid Review could provide a short briefing on the latest academic and practice trends in international development and in Romania, with a briefing on the ground situation and developmental needs of Romania's priority countries or any other resources that might be relevant to each edition.

B. PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

This section of the report will assess the extent to which the Romanian Development Camp meets its purposes as described above, taking into consideration the design of the project, its financing and implementation modality and the organization of the event (target groups, agenda, working formats).

The project was initiated in 2008, one year after Romania became an ODA provider, following its accession to the European Union. Seven editions have been implemented until now (August 2014) on a yearly basis: 18-20 September 2008 at Cheile Gradistei; 16-19 September 2009 at Venus; 24-27 June 2010 at Bucharest and Covasna; 6-8 July 2011 at Cluj-Napoca; 11-13 July 2012 at Predeal; 15-17 July 2013 at Sibiu; 9-11 July 2014 at Sinaia. During these seven editions, the event has gathered over 600 participants representing major national and European stakeholders in development cooperation from governmental actors, civil society, international donors, partner countries, academia, local authorities, mass media, and the private sector.



Throughout its seven editions, the Development Camp has remained a very inclusive event, bringing together all major Romanian development stakeholders. The target groups that proved to be more difficult to co-interest were the private sector and political representatives (at national or European level).

The first two editions were implemented by UNDP Romania in close partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the latter taking the lead on setting the agenda and the scope of the event, identifying speakers and designing the format of its sessions. Starting with 2010, the Romanian NGDO Federation (FOND) has been leading the implementation of the project, in partnership with the MFA and the UNDP. For the 2010 and 2011 editions, the MFA assumed an active agenda setting role. However, starting with the 2012 edition, FOND gained increasingly more ownership over the event, taking a more active and extensive role in the implementation of the project. For example, for the last 3 editions, FOND elaborated the concept for each Development Camp edition and proposed the draft agenda for further consultations and negotiations with the MFA. Also, FOND was in charge with the identification of adequate lecturers/trainers/resource persons, with the design of each session (content and format) and with the overall facilitation of the event.

The Development Camp has been perceived as a rather punctual annual event, and the project had an average duration of 3 - 4 months, including preparation, the actual event, and follow up activities (such as drafting reports and any other post-event deliverable as applicable for each year). The agenda is prepared approximately 2 months in advance of the event by FOND which drafts the first proposal after consultations with its members (FOND members are invited to nominate topics that should be placed on the agenda via the regular FOND newsletters). The proposal is then submitted to the MFA which offers its feedback and guidance and to the UNDP. The lecturers / resource persons are also proposed by FOND and decided upon after consultations with the MFA, UNDP and any other relevant stakeholder. In recent editions, the speakers were prepared prior to their participation to the Camp by FOND, which provided briefings on the Romanian ODA context and specific guidance regarding the objectives and expected results of each session. However, based on the feedback offered by participants⁴ and on the data gathered during this evaluation, the organisers did not have ample time for substantial work on the content and methodology of presentations, mostly due to timing constraints.

With regard to the community building exercise, most interviewees and most respondent to the annual evaluation forms have stated that the Development Camp offers a unique networking opportunity. However, the project could have been more successful with respect to the creation of a living development community should there have been follow-up activities to keep the members of this group engaged on a continuous basis. Development practitioners meet and communicate throughout the year, but in smaller groups – for example in other FOND event, in the Consultative Councils, etc. Therefore, the interactions between the Development Camp community members are very limited outside of the annual three-day event.

Among other purposes, the Camp is designed as a channel for national dialogue on the strategic and normative framework of the Romanian ODA. However, at this point, the event remains an instrument for ensuring transparency rather than one for facilitating substantial public consultations. The level of the discussions led during the various consultations that took place within the Development Camp (during the 2012, 2013 and 2014 editions) was rather shallow and, consequently, the substantial feedback gathered during the event was diluted and with a limited usability, given the limited experience of a certain number of participants.

Starting with 2012⁵, FOND has applied for funding to the annual ODA grants awarded by the MFA, in an open projects competition with all other applicant NGOs. One of the main strengths of this event, as perceived by most beneficiaries, is its predictability and recurrence, which are not guaranteed through this financing modality. Given the strategic importance of this event for the evolution of the Romanian development community, the Development Camp should be financed through a modality that guarantees its annual implementation – which would imply securing the financing of this project outside of the grants competition. Under the current legislative framework, this option is not feasible at this point, but the matter could be addressed upon the redrafting of the ODA normative framework. Alternatively, the ODA projects competition could contain a special financing line dedicated to capacity building/community development for the Romanian ODA community. FOND is, however, perfectly equipped to implement this project,

⁴ As recorded in the yearly evaluation reports.

⁵ The first call for projects was organized by the MFA in 2012. The selected projects were implemented in 2013.

given its competitive advantage of being officially mandated to liaise between the civil society and the decision makers concerned with the field of ODA.

One of the most important challenges in the implementation of this project has proven to be the late financing of the project, due, to a significant extent, to the calendar of the MFA ODA grants procedure. The payment delays result in less time to design and manage the agenda, less time to promote the event and brief thoroughly the participants and the trainers/resource persons (both salient for meeting the objectives of the event).

CONCLUSION:

The rating for the effectiveness criteria is **satisfactory**.

The annual evaluation reports and the data gathered from the interviews conducted for this report have shown that most participants have benefited professionally from all Development Camp editions, and that the information presented was relevant and substantial. However, the project design needs to be amended so as to facilitate a substantial dialogue between stakeholders, meaningful policy input and a real and sustainable community building exercise. Given the high ambitions of the event and its strategic role for the evolutions of the Romanian development community, the project should be allocated a longer implementation period, to allow for a more thorough preparation of the event (including wide consultations with all major stakeholders) and more vigorous follow-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Given the strategic importance of the project for the evolution of the Romanian development community, consider amending the funding modality of this project (on the medium term) - once the applicable legislation allows for such funding modalities, withdraw the Romanian Development Camp from the grants competition and include the project in the strategic partnership between MAE and FOND in order to consolidate the project's continuity and predictability.
- For future editions that are implemented under the current modality, consider postponing the organisation of the event for September (as the first editions) to avoid payment delays.
- The project should be redesigned as a more ample initiative, with an implementation period of a minimum of 6 months. The work on the agenda needs to start 3 months before the event so that the organisers have the necessary time to reach out to the best resource persons, taking into consideration the busy agenda of potential high-level speakers who are less likely to be able attend the event upon short notice. Also, a lengthier preparation stage allows for a more firm control over the content of presentations, and ensures, consequently, greater coherence between speakers' interventions, avoiding redundancy among

presentations. Also, a number of follow-up activities should be included in the project design so as to maintain the participants engaged in the topics discussed during the Camp, activities that could take the form of – the distribution of regular newsletters, the set-up of online/off-line discussion groups on the main themes of each edition, or any other method applicable to each specific edition (for more detailed recommendations, please see the section on sustainability of results).

- The focus and agenda of each edition need to be widely negotiated with all major stakeholders, including the MFA, civil society representatives (FOND members and non-members alike) and the academia. Based on the conducted research, the participants appreciated positively the agenda setup process, but a preference for more flexibility emerged. For example, considering the fact that the Development Camp is a rather long event, the organisers could block one time slot for a topic that is decided during the first sessions of the event.
- With regard to the format of the working sessions of the Development Camp, the plenaries are generally the less appreciated sessions; the participants have expressed their preference for more interactive formats, focusing on topics that are engaging and practical. The more theoretical sessions and the experience sharing exercises (with other donor countries in the region/international organizations) should be followed by practical working groups to explore the applicability of the shared information for the current Romanian development sector.
- Briefing the speakers and offering guidelines on the content/expected deliverables is an excellent starting point, which should be adopted as a good practice. However, in order to ensure the quality of the presentations and their coherence, the organisers need to be more persistent with the agenda negotiation – agreeing on the precise scope and content of each speaker’s intervention - and have a stronger control over the content of the Development Camp sessions. An effective negotiation of the agenda is however dependent on the time allocation for the preparation phase of the event and the current design of the project does not allow for very substantial work on the substance and methodology of presentations.
- The speakers, resource persons and moderators don’t only need to be knowledgeable on a specific technical subject, but also have good presentation/moderation skills and engage with the audience in an enthusiastic, inviting and motivational manner. The organisers could set-up a minimum training session prior to the start of the event on presentation skills and methodologies. Such a session would also offer a good opportunity to coordinate the various topics and interventions of the event, by bringing together all trainers and resource persons.
- In order to ensure that the Development Camp facilitates a meaningful dialogue between the civil society and the decision makers, it is salient for the participants to be well briefed and to have a well-articulated position on the subject of the respective consultation. Until now, the organisers have generally submitted the necessary documentation to all participants ahead of the event, but this was proven to be insufficient. One alternative solution is the creation of a short briefing material (a two pager) on the main topics of the Development Camp and on the expectations that each edition raises from its participants. The document should be short and accessible and should state clearly how and why each stakeholder is expected to get

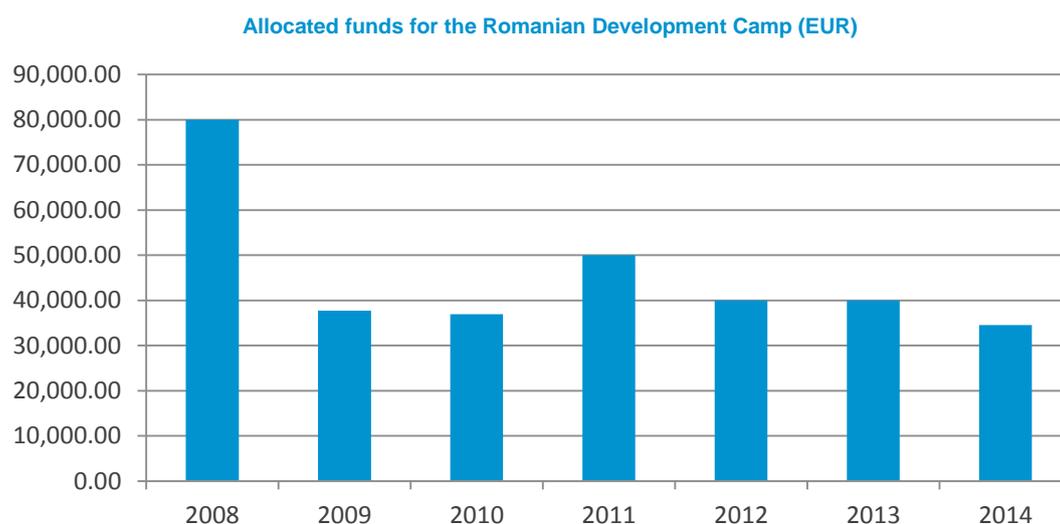
engaged during the event. If possible, the organisers could also set-up some preparatory online/offline sessions with the registered participants to discuss the topic and galvanise opinions/positions. The event could also be more selective so as to include only the participants that have a real interest and contribution to the topics under discussion. Under these circumstances, a smaller event with fewer participants would create more substantial input and entertain more focused discussions.

- With regard to the participants at the Development Camp, it is necessary for all MFA grantees to be present during the event, as they represent a very important component of the national development community. Moreover, the Development Camp should continue to offer the opportunity for grantees to present their ODA funded projects, to help explore common points of interest / the potential for partnerships between civil society representatives/members of the academia. Based on the preferences expressed by the participants regarding the format of working session, panel discussions/plenaries are not the most adequate setting for such presentations. More interactive modalities could be chosen for this section of the event – for example the set-up of an interactive projects gallery.
- Given the relatively small size of the Romanian development community, direct professional interactions are very important in the economy of the evolution of this group. The Romanian Development Camp offers a unique opportunity for socialization and team building, which could be better explored by organising various extra-curricular activities and by setting the event in a more remote location, particularly feasible should the organisers opt for the organisation of a smaller event.
- In order to make the learning experience more substantial and immediate, the event could include a practical component – a practical activity/a challenge in which participants need to apply in real-life situations the skills and knowledge that have been presented during the theoretical sessions.
- The project should continue the capacity building exercise, both on thematic issues (Romania's thematic priorities) and practical skills (for example lobbying, advocacy, project management, etcetera).

C. PROJECT EFFICIENCY

This section of the report will assess the extent to which the costs incurred by the organisation of the Romanian Development Camp are justifiable and transparently allocated.

The budget of this project has evolved as follows: 80.000 EUR (2008), 37.750 EUR (2009), 37.000 EUR (2010), 50.000 EUR (2011), 40.000 EUR (2012), 40.000 EUR (2013) and 34.500 EUR (2014).



The sums allocated to this project have been made public on the dedicated ODA website – www.aod.ro, on the website of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the ODA yearly national reports.

CONCLUSION:

The rating for the effectiveness criteria is **highly satisfactory**.

The sums allocated for this project are justifiable, considering the size of the event (number of participants, number of days) and as compared to other similar projects. The financial allocation for this project was transparent and widely shared with the large public.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Based on the rationale argued in the previous sections of this report, FOND could redesign this initiative as a smaller-scale project – with fewer participants, but with a longer duration of implementation, allocating more resources for follow up activities and for the preparation of the event.
- Better calibrate the logistical details of the event to its purpose – avoid 4 and 5 star hotels whenever possible and all other expensive logistics.

D. SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

This section of the report will assess the sustainability of the results achieved by the Romanian Development Camp throughout the last seven editions, from an institutional, financial, and project design perspective.

From an institutional point of view, the Romanian Development Camp has significantly improved its sustainability, as FOND grew its capacity to implement this project. As opposed to the 2008-2009 editions which were organised by the MFA and UNDP Romania, FOND is now fully capable to design and implement the entire event and has significantly increased its ownership on the initiative, particularly during the last three years, when the Federation assumed the leading agenda-setting role .

Throughout the last seven years the donor has shown continued and strong political will to support and fund the project. However, given current legislative constraints, the project cannot be financed outside of the annual call for proposals and cannot be planned on a multi-annual basis, affecting its long-term financial sustainability. Upon the amendment of the applicable ODA legislation, the funding modality for this project should be changed in order to ensure the predictable and continuous financing of the event. Moreover, the Romanian Development Camp could be included (not necessarily including a financing engagement) in the collaboration protocol between the MFA and FOND, given the strategic importance of the project for both actors.

Based on the data gathered from the post-event feedback forms and the conducted interviews, the project follow-up is insufficient for the achievement of sustainable results. The lack of substantial and regular follow-up activities hinders the successful operationalization of the development camp debates and experience sharing exercises – frequently, the exchange of information is kept at the level of awareness rising, and beneficiaries don't make full use of the capacity building experience, not being able to transpose this information in real life situations. Also, a better follow-up plan would facilitate the emergence of a more substantial public consultation exercise (between decision makers and all other stakeholders in the field of Romanian ODA) and would foster the emergence of a functional and living Romanian community of practice in the field of development. The activities that do take place after the Development Camp (organised through different projects) are not as inclusive and open and don't offer a substantial opportunity for follow-up to the Development Camp – for example development stakeholders meet regularly in smaller formats in FOND assemblies and consultations, during the Consultative Council meeting, with the occasion of various meetings organised for the civil society or the academia. Moreover, most project beneficiaries of the project have expressed their preference for the Development Camp to evolve in a more ambitious project with more continuity between editions and with a more strategic focus, rather than a stream of individual events organised annually.

CONCLUSION:

The rating for the sustainability is **satisfactory**.

This project is formulated with wide ambitions and strategic objectives – building the capacity of national development stakeholders is a long term endeavour, which requires continuity and flexibility towards the evolving capacity building

needs of the beneficiaries. Moreover, creating and keeping active a professional network requires substantial engagement and a constant effort.

The institutional infrastructure required for the continuity of the event is stable at this point as FOND developed increased capacities to implement the Romanian Development Camp, in close partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From a financial point of view, the sustainability of this project is hindered by the legislative limitations which dictate an unsuitable financing modality.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- As previously argued, more follow-up activities were requested by all stakeholders. At the end of each Development Camp edition the organizers could design a final working session on lessons learned, participants' expectations for the following months and the operationalization of that year's edition. The participants could contribute to the elaboration of a feasible action plan with follow-up activities for the next year based on the most important topics discussed during the event. Informal groups could be established to work on these main topics (gather briefing materials, write regular newsletters/updates, facilitate the contact between various members of the community) with a task leader/rapporteur that would ideally be a volunteer from the participants to the event. Alternatively, FOND seems to be the best placed actor to take on this responsibility, and if current human/financial resources are not sufficient, the budget can be recalibrated by diminishing the number of participants.
- Most interviewed persons see that there is a need for more continuity between Development Camp editions and do not perceive this project as a one-off event that takes place once per year with the sole purpose of providing information. It is therefore advisable for the event to be designed in a more strategic manner, setting strategic medium-term objectives, as has been done in the last three editions.
- In order to make full use of the best practices and information shared during the event, the project needs a strong practical component through which the participants can explore how to implement/transpose the shared experiences to the particularities of the Romanian ODA scene. The format for such activities may vary considerably among editions, depending on the subjects addressed by each year's Development Camp, but one possible format for the current status quo is the organization of a few post-event sessions (online or off-line) crafted for each target group.

E. PROJECT IMPACT

This evaluation is not an impact assessment of the Development Camp, but, given the fact that the project has been successfully implemented in seven editions, starting with 2008, a number of observations can be made regarding the impact it has had on the evolution of the Romanian development professional arena.

Firstly, the Romanian Development Camp contributed to a large extent in the creation of development community of practice in Romania, starting with the identification of the most active stakeholders in the field and continuing then with bringing them together in an annual gathering, in the only event of its kind in Romania. The research conducted for this evaluation indicates that one of the most important functions of the Development Camp, equally relevant to all of the event's beneficiaries, is the networking and community building component.

Secondly, the public consultations (mainly between decision makers and the civil society) facilitated by the Romanian Development Camp enhanced the openness and the substance of the dialogue between the two, serving as both an accountability instrument for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a channel for policy shaping for the development NGOs. Moreover, the consultations on strategic and normative documents that took place during the last three DevCamp editions resulted in a higher involvement and participation of the civil society and academic sector in the decision making process. A higher ownership from the civil society in the long-term shaping of the Romanian ODA could result in better project proposals, in stronger alignment to the priorities set by MFA, and a higher degree of support and mutual trust between the two sectors.

At this point, the Romanian Development Camp is not shaped as an environment for action, when projects are designed and discussed, but has a very high potential for becoming a projects incubator, particularly given the evolution of the field in recent years. Two practical examples can be given regarding the capacity of the Development Camp to grow projects and initiatives: in 2010, the Arcadia personnel doubled following the event, and the focus of the association was changed the interactions facilitated by the Development Camp. World Vision used this project to raise the profile of child protection as a specialized development assistance niche in the Romanian ODA and contributed to policy shaping according to their agenda.



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STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



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- One of the lead advantages of the project is the fact that it manages to coagulate the entire development community, bringing something relevant for each of its target groups. Therefore, the Romanian Development Camp cannot function as a one-size-fits-all project – the organisers must acknowledge and adjust to the different interests, needs and perspectives of each target group in order to maintain a wide interest for the event and to keep the event relevant for the entire community. The scope, objectives and, consequently, the agenda of each edition needs to be negotiated with all major stakeholders and should take into consideration their preferences, which may change from edition to edition.
- The project should enhance its national focus - the event should be a reflexive exercise where the national development community meets to plan for the year ahead and reviews the achievements and lessons-learned of the previous one, to consult, to network, to create partnerships and test ideas, to develop skills and discuss the latest trends in international development. The Romanian development community and policy have evolved significantly in the last eight years so as to justify the need for an event focused primarily on the priorities of the national ODA sector. Internationally, the Romanian Development Camp should focus on facilitating the sharing of experience between the emerging donors in the region, in a horizontal capacity building experience.
- The Romanian Development Camp could be redesigned as a smaller scale event, bringing together a smaller number of participants selected through a more rigorous procedure to ensure that the most interested participants attend the event, and that the level of the debates meets the project ambitions. The selection process should be highly transparent and inclusive, providing well in advance equal and substantial information to all interested stakeholders.
- This project is formulated with wide ambitions and strategic objectives – building the capacity of national development stakeholders is a long term endeavour, which requires continuity and flexibility towards the evolving capacity building needs of the beneficiaries. Moreover, creating and keeping active a professional network requires substantial engagement and a constant effort. For these purposes, the event has to be perceived by both the financier and the implementer as a long-term initiative that requires continuity, consistency and predictability.

