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Partners for protection: a review of the organizational capacity of NGOs in Romania

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Introduction

Since its inception in 1945, the UN has relied on its close relationship with civil society in order to carry out its work. These partnerships have allowed the UN, together with civil society, to achieve significant results in promoting democracy, human rights and the development of international law.

As the agency responsible for the protection of refugees, UNHCR has a solid record of collaboration with NGO partners since it began its work in 1951, and currently relies on these partners to provide a wide range of services to persons of concern. Such partners can be described as “implementing”, in that they receive financial support from UNHCR to perform specific services to beneficiaries, or “operating”, where no financial support is given but the organisation works in close coordination with UNHCR. Both types of partnership may also work together with UNHCR on advocacy and public information activities, promoting a favourable protection environment for persons of concern.

In Romania there are currently six such NGO partners, four of which are implementing and two of which are operational. These partner NGOs provide a wide range of services, including social and legal assistance, which are key to the well-being of persons of concern. Over the coming years, it is expected that these NGOs will make a gradual transition from implementing to operational partnerships, continuing to offer assistance and contribute to the protection of persons of concern in Romania.

This transition forms a part of the strategic policy objectives of UNHCR in Europe, where NGOs will take on increasingly greater responsibility for areas formerly assumed or supported by UNHCR. The assumption is that the European Refugee Fund, together with other donors, will provide the necessary resources for existing NGOs to provide protection and assistance services and that the EU will also play an important monitoring role. It is therefore expected that the overall protection climate will remain stable and that no negative policy will be adopted.

However, there are a number of factors that should be taken into account in considering the extent to which NGOs in Romania, in comparison to other EU Member States, are able to fulfil this increased level of responsibility. The current review has been conducted with a view to clarifying this issue, by examining the stage at which Romanian partner NGOs are as regards capacity. Particular attention will also be paid to the unique external factors in Romania that may affect partner NGOs’ capacity, such as administration of the European Refugee Fund and the historical context of Romanian civil society.

Methodology

For the purposes of this review, only UNHCR implementing or operational partner organisations in Bucharest were considered. The organisations that were included are as follows:

ARCA – Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants (implementing partner)

CNRR – Romanian National Council for Refugees (implementing partner)

JRS – Jesuit Refugee Service, Romania (operational partner)

RWO – Refugee Women’s Organisation (implementing partner)

SC – Save the Children, Romania (implementing partner 2007, operational partner 2008)

In order to gather information regarding NGO capacity, two different techniques were employed: a quantitative rating of the organisation's capacity was obtained through the UNHCR NGO Partner Capacity Self-Assessment Tool (Assessment Tool), whilst a complementary, in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted through a semi-structured interview. This combination was chosen to allow both an external analysis of capacity (through the interview) and an internal analysis (through the Assessment Tool), thereby improving the reliability of the findings.

It was decided that both of these techniques would measure organisational capacity in the following four areas, which are considered to be the most important regarding the organisation's ability to provide protection services to persons of concern: financial capacity, human resources capacity, management capacity and advocacy capacity.

The semi-structured interview consisted of both closed and open-ended questions that were complimentary to the Assessment Tool in order to obtain both in-depth qualitative and standardised information. Interviews were conducted with both management and employees of partner NGOs in order to receive a more complete picture of the organisation.

The Assessment Tool was developed based on material used to assess organisational capacity by USAID and the Inter-American Development Bank, which was adapted to the UNHCR context¹. It consists of a series of questions under each capacity area, following by a rating system, which allows for the comparison of the different areas that may require attention and the stage of development in each area. The rating system was as follows:

- 1= Requires immediate support
- 2= Requires support
- 3= Good, but could use some support
- 4= No need for additional training

The Assessment Tool was introduced to partner NGOs during a meeting where its format and purpose were explained and it was then sent to each NGO in advance of a set interview date. A meeting was then held on each NGO premises, commencing with the semi-structured interview. Respondents were given the option of not answering any given questions and stopping the interview at any point. Following the interview, the Assessment Tool was introduced and explained again, and each organisation was requested to rate their own capacity in each area. A combination of management and employees were involved in the rating system. The rating system allowed for capacity to be assessed in a structured and consistent manner. The results of the interviews were transcribed into a database and content analysis was used to process the qualitative data.

Due to resource constraints, the NGOs interviewed were located in Bucharest and one NGO partner outside of Bucharest was therefore excluded from the review. However, it is not expected that this would have significantly changed the overall results and conclusions.

¹ This tool was developed using material from the Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT), Recent Practices in Monitoring and Evaluation, Number 15, 2000 and the Organisational Capacity Self-Assessment Tool, Inter-American Development Bank, available from the Academy of Educational Development.

Additionally, the scope of the current research was contained to the four areas considered more relevant to NGO capacity in the refugee field. However, additional areas such as service delivery could be examined in the future in order to provide a more complete picture. Although it was outside the scope of the current review to investigate the potential contribution of NGOs that are not currently UNHCR partners to the protection environment, this is an area that may be worth examining in the future.

The historical context of Romanian civil society

Whilst Romanian civil society has been characterized in recent years by a developing maturity, increased professionalism and the appearance of more specialized NGOs with targeted activities, there are a number of issues that remain of concern. Despite considerable progress since the revolution of 1989, the general social environment is currently still not supportive of civil society and of NGOs in particular. This has a negative impact on the ability of NGO partners to fulfill the protection needs of persons of concern. There are several reasons for this lack of support, which can be attributed to the history of Romanian civil society and the post-communist context of the region².

Although the roots of civil society in Romania can be traced to the democratic period between the two world wars, its development was stunted by the establishment of a communist regime for 42 years³. In 1989, the fall of this regime brought about the rapid re-emergence of civil society, with the number of registrations of NGOs reaching as much as 400 per month in 1990⁴. However, the effect that the regime had on inhibiting the growth of a civil society and the culture of philanthropy continued well into the years following its downfall in 1989. In particular, the inhibition of social relations has caused a lack of civic involvement and a lack of trust in civil society organisations

Social and cultural factors

In describing the effects of Romania's history on civil society, a recent study noted that "a long history of domination by foreign and government powers has undermined key elements of civil society, such as trust, self-determination and community responsibility"⁵. Indeed, a recent survey found that 90% of Romania's population do not trust other citizens, the effect of which is a low level of citizen participation and support of civil society⁶.

In addition, the NGO sector suffers from a distinct image problem, "where scandals about the misuse of NGO funds are fresh in people's minds"⁷. Indeed, one NGO leader who was interviewed in a separate study, elaborated on the matter, stating "there was one week of a brutal media campaign against NGOs where they were accused of smuggling cars and other

² Phinnemore, D. (2006) *The EU and Romania: Accession and Beyond*. The Federal Trust for Education and Research, London.

³ For an overview of the historical roots of civil society in Romania, see Saulean, D. & Epure, C. *Civil Society Development Foundation. (1998) Defining The Nonprofit Sector: Romania. Working Papers Of The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.*

⁴ Saulean, D. & Epure, C. *Civil Society Development Foundation. (1998) Defining The Nonprofit Sector: Romania. Working Papers Of The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.*

⁵ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000) *Review of the Romanian NGO Sector. Strengthening Donor Strategies*. London: Charity Know How.

⁶ *Dialogue for civil society. Report on the state of civil society in Romania, 2005. CIVICUS, civil society index, civil society development foundation, Romania.*

⁷ Howard, M., M (2002) *The Weakness of Post-communist Civil Society*. *Journal of Democracy* 13:1, 157-169.

goods for the benefit of their individual founders, of misusing foreign funds, etc. This was a false generalisation but unfortunately real examples of fraud existed. This did a huge amount of damage to the image of the sector”⁸.

A recent public opinion survey showed that only 14% of society trust NGOs, and only 12% are affiliated with an organisation or association⁹. In general, the public would prefer to put their trust in the church (90.1%), army (78.6%) or media (65.5%) before NGOs¹⁰. This is thought to be the result of misinformation, with many people believing that NGOs are automatically subsidised by the state, with political agendas¹¹. Another study suggests that this lack of trust emanates from the perception of the individual about society in general, that is that the individual lacks the power to influence political decisions and believes that decisions can be made by the powerful only¹².

This is also related to the lack of transparency at high levels in Romania and its effect on society, creating mistrust and inhibiting the growth of a strong NGO sector. Studies show that, in comparison with other EU member states, which continued to receive top ratings for political rights and civil liberties, Romania stands noticeably apart, with a poorer ranking, which is in part due to this lack of transparency¹³. Indeed, a recent review of donors supporting the NGO sector in Romania showed that they considered lack of transparency and bureaucracy as the key factors negatively influencing the operational environment for NGOs¹⁴.

Although, in recent times, there may have been a small increase in the willingness of the public to take part in civil society initiatives, a general cautiousness regarding NGOs remains in society.

Political factors

The relation between the Romanian Government and civil society has also affected the growth of NGOs since 1989. It was not until political reform occurred in the late 1990s that NGOs began to be accepted by the Romanian Government. New legislation was passed in 2000, which improved the process for NGOs to register, engage in economic activities and have access to information¹⁵. In the following years, the tension that existed between the Government and the NGO sector dissipated, and the Government is generally more supportive of civil society now. However, relations with the NGO sector are still in their youth, with support varying between sectors and individual NGOs. Whilst some have criticised the Government for not “considering the importance of the role of NGOs in addressing the problems of communities”¹⁶, another review quotes Government respondents as considering

⁸ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3 p29

⁹ Public Opinion Barometer (2004), cited in Ana Bălaşa, (2004). *Contributia Sectorului Neguvernamental la Realizarea unor Obiective ale Politicilor Sociale si La Ameliorarea Calitatii Vietii Populatiei*. Institute for Quality of Life Research, Bucharest.

¹⁰ The White Papers of the Romanian Nongovernmental Organizations Forum. (1999) Bucharest : CENTRAS, The Assistance Center for Nongovernmental Organizations

¹¹ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

¹² Ana Bălaşa, (2004). *Contributia Sectorului Neguvernamental la Realizarea unor Obiective ale Politicilor Sociale si La Ameliorarea Calitatii Vietii Populatiei*. Institute for Quality of Life Research, Bucharest.

¹³ Freedom in the World, 2007. Freedom House

¹⁴ Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) *Review of Donor Support for the NGO Sector in Romania*. Bucharest: Romanian Donors’ Forum.

¹⁵ Law no. 246/2005 regarding Associations and Foundations in Romania

¹⁶ Ana Bălaşa, (2004). Supra note 12

that “the NGO sector has an enormous role to play in Romania, from developing services that the state cannot provide, to facilitating dialogue between citizens and the state.”¹⁷

It is expected that the relationship between Government and the NGO sector will continue to develop and improve in the coming years, particularly after the recent EU accession. As a new EU Member State, there are expectations of economic growth and an increase in transparency. The EU integration process also encourages Governments to work together with civil society in order to distribute funds in strategic areas, which will require increased cooperation between the Romanian Government and NGOs. In addition, the current process of decentralisation in the Romanian Government, with increasing power being granted to local authorities, provides potential for new partnerships to develop. Thus, although reform is an ongoing process that has posed challenges to the Romanian Government, recent developments suggest that relations between the Government and NGOs will continue to improve.

The youth of the refugee sector

It is also important to note that the asylum system in Romania was established relatively recently, in 1996¹⁸. NGOs addressing the needs of refugees are therefore very young, with an average lifespan of 9 years in Bucharest. This is in stark contrast to NGOs in the refugee field in Western Europe, many of which have been established for decades, with a considerable capacity for addressing the protection needs of refugees. Considering the youth of the NGOs in the refugee field in Romania, the extent to which partnerships have already been formed across sectors is commendable. Further development of these partnerships and public image should be expected as the NGOs mature.

In conclusion, although studies show that the NGO sector has developed quickly over the last ten years¹⁹, it should be noted that the refugee sector in particular, is still maturing. Political and social factors, such as the lack of public support for civil society, have had a damaging effect on the capacity of NGO partners, which is crucial for a healthy protection environment. However, recent changes in the Government approach to civil society, coupled with a slow growth in public awareness of NGOs suggest that partners can expect a more enabling environment in which to operate in the near future.

¹⁷ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

¹⁸ Law 15/1996 regarding the status and regime of refugees in Romania.

¹⁹ Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) Supra note 14

Results

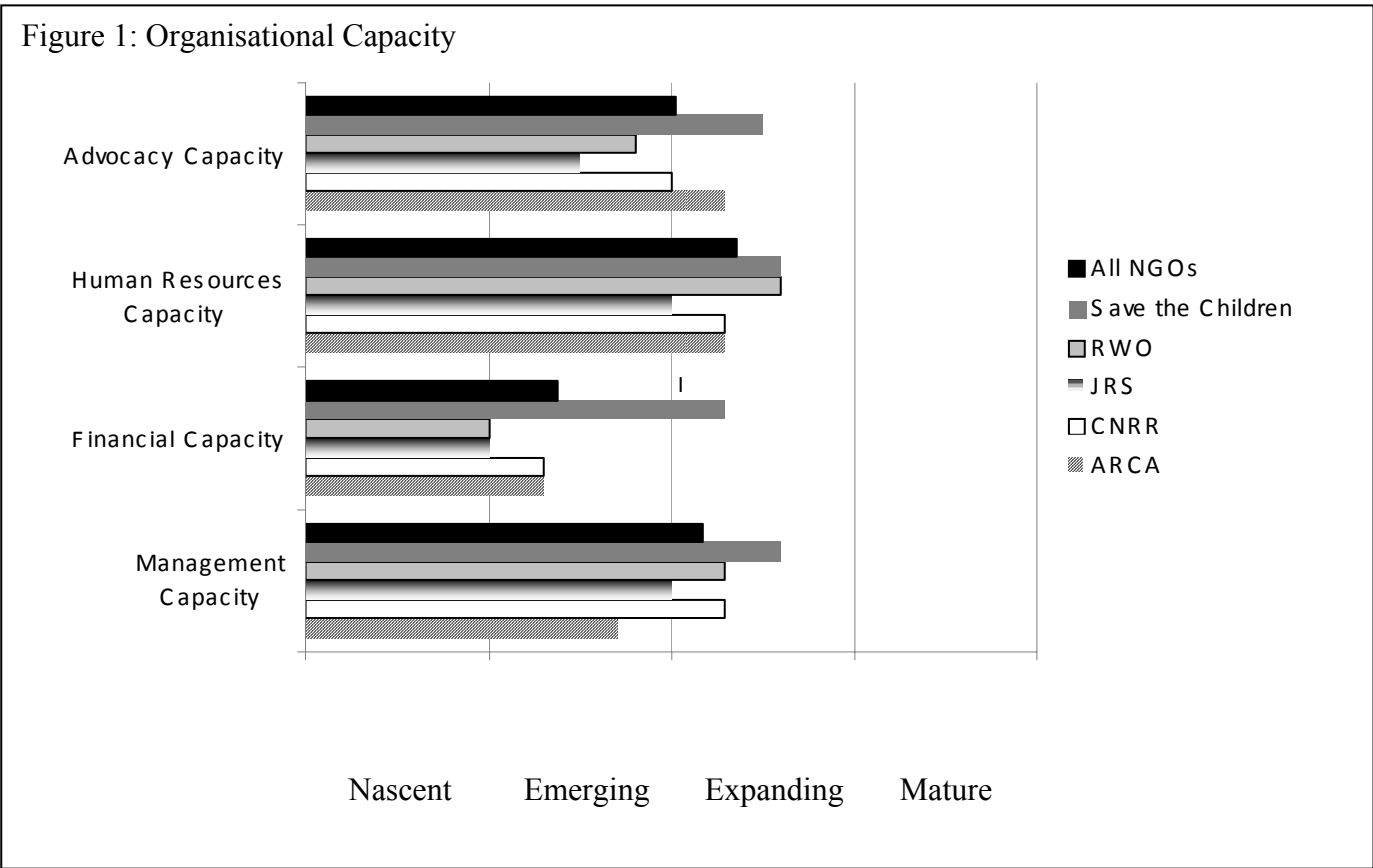
In analysing the results of the Assessment Tool, the rating scale system was transferred to a measure of organisational development as follows:

0-1= Nascent: The NGO is in it earliest stages of development and needs urgent attention.

1.1-2= Emerging: The NGO is developing some capacity but still needs training.

2.1-3= Expanding: The NGO has a track record of achievement but could do with improvement.

3.1-4= Mature: The NGO is fully functional and sustainable.

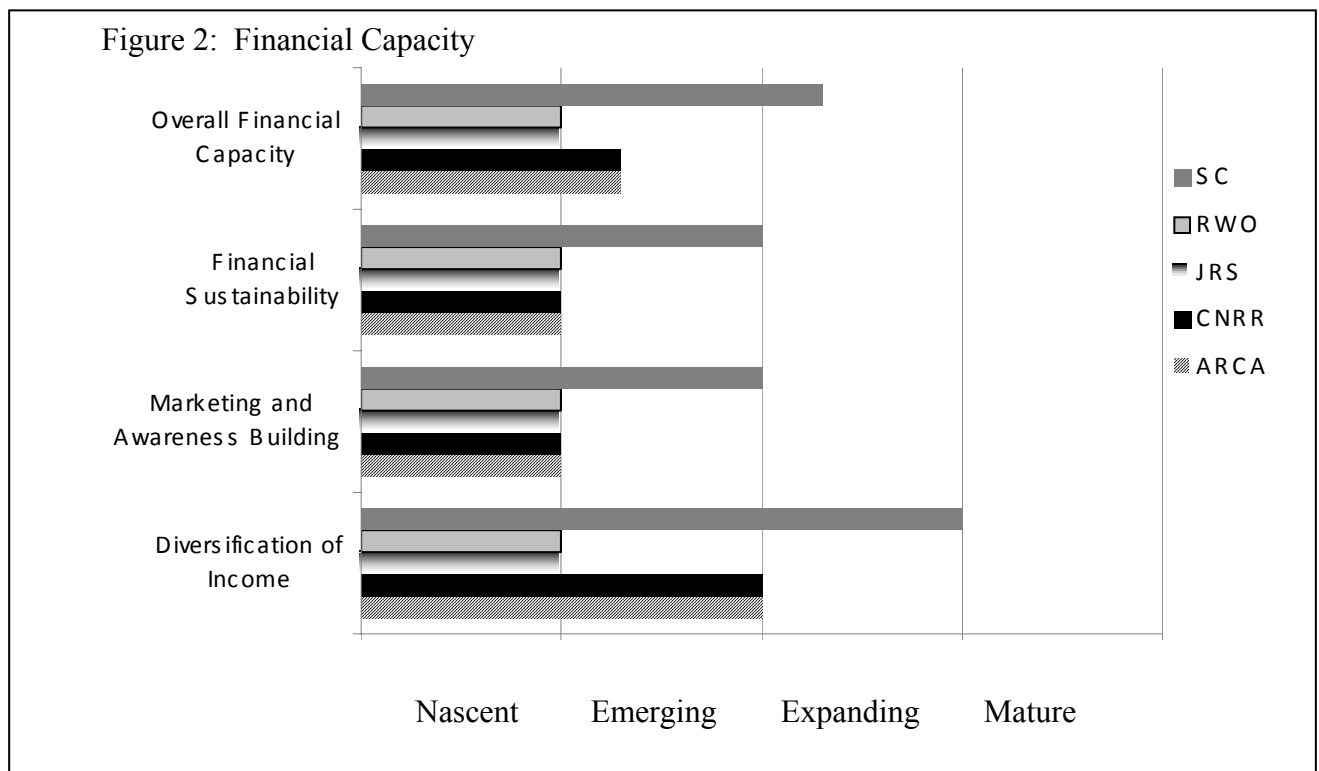


As can be seen in the above chart, all organisations can be considered as emerging/ requiring additional training. No partner NGO rated itself as mature on any of the sectors, implying that all NGOs consider that there is a need for training. The lowest scoring sector was financial capacity, followed by advocacy, management and then human resources. As financial capacity and advocacy capacity scored lower, and are both crucial to partner organisation’s ability to contribute to the protection of persons of concern in Romania, these sections will be considered first and in greater detail.

Financial capacity

The financial capacity of the NGO sector is clearly important not only in terms of survival but in order to attain a level of sustainability, allowing for long-term strategic planning. In context of the strategic policy objectives of UNHCR in Europe, it is essential that partner NGOs identify alternative sources of funding to UNHCR. Accordingly, in measuring financial capacity of partner NGOs, diversification of income was an important factor, as well as financial sustainability and marketing and awareness building.

Results from the capacity assessment revealed that financial capacity was the weakest area overall, with most organisations rating as nascent or emerging, as illustrated in Figure 2. The following chapter will examine the financial capacity of partner NGOs in relation to the results for each component of financial capacity: a) financial sustainability, b) diversification of income, c) marketing and awareness building.



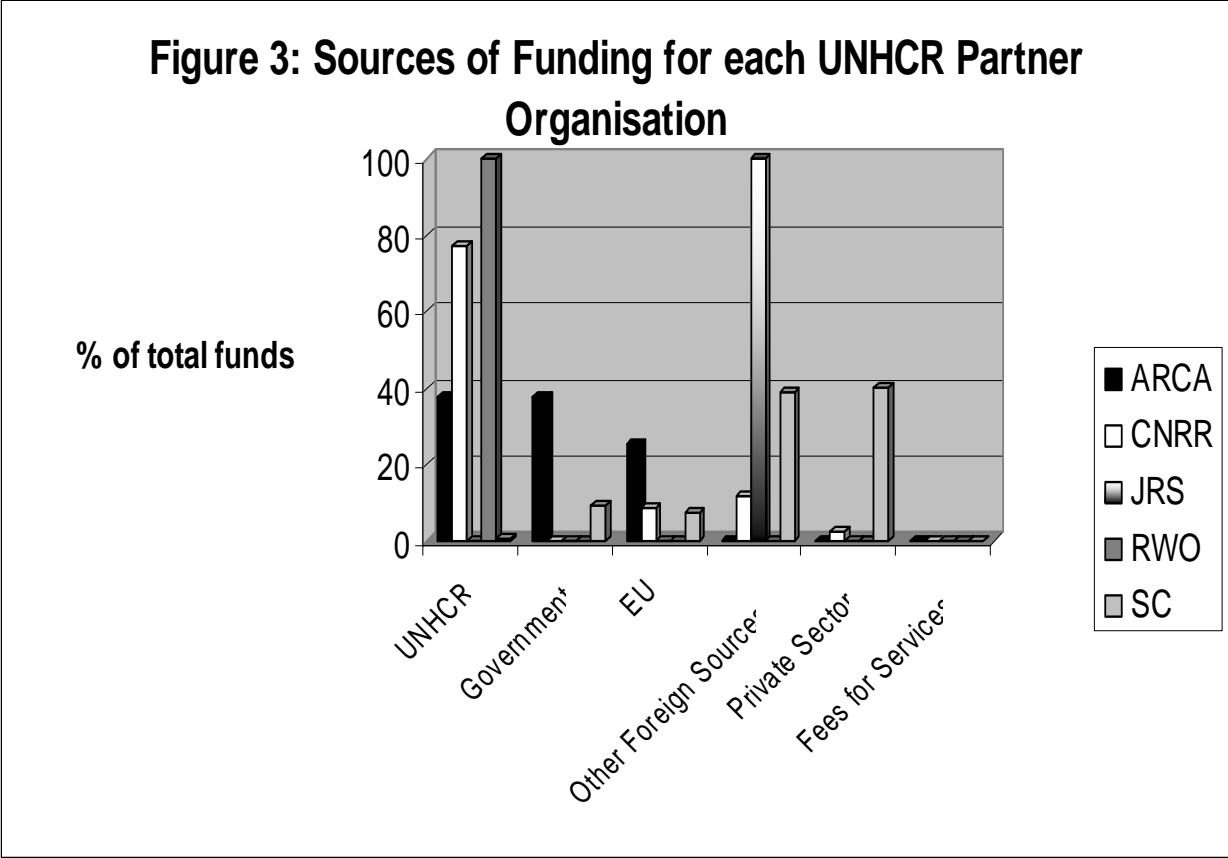
Financial sustainability

Regarding the financial sustainability of NGO partners, four out of five organisations had no formal developed long-term fundraising strategy. This was in part due to a shortage of personnel available for this purpose, as four out of five had no fundraising department and three had no specific person allocated for this purpose. Fundraising efforts are largely focused on searching for projects and writing grant proposals. The main sources of information regarding grant opportunities were through international partners or affiliated offices and the internet. As a result of this strategy, most funds are project-based, with a limited duration.

There is no sustainable recovery of costs through income generation or fees for services programmes.

Diversification of income

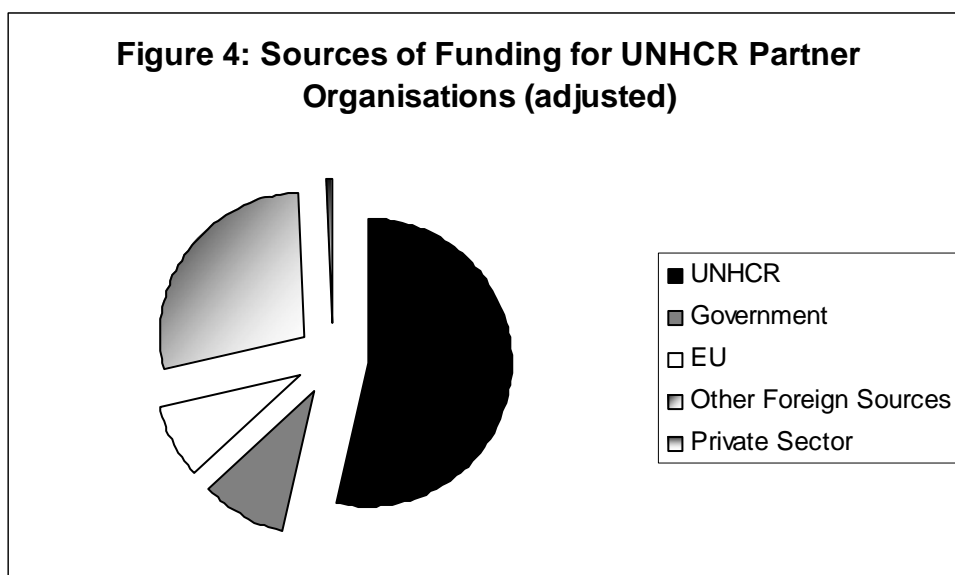
Results confirm the concern expressed by NGO partners regarding the lack of variety in sources of funding, as two of the organisations were supported by only a single source of funding (one of which was UNHCR) and were thus in danger of collapsing with the removal of these funds. This can be seen in the following graph, illustrating the various sources of funding for each partner NGO.



In analysing the data related to funding sources, it should be noted that the organisation SC represent an atypical example amongst UNHCR partner NGOs. The total budget for 2007 of all the other organisations together was less than a fifth of the annual budget of SC alone. For many answers related to funding, SC gave significantly different responses from the other organisations, which resulted in a distortion of the data regarding funding resources.

In addition, only a small proportion of SC activities are directly related to refugees. Therefore the chart below (figure 4) is adjusted by extracting the data from SC, reflecting the average funding sources for the remaining organisations. It can be seen that many organisations are still largely reliant on UNHCR as their main funding source, with other foreign donors representing the next most significant source, and negligible contributions from the private sector. The Government and the EU represent emerging and potential future sources of funding.

Figure 4: Sources of Funding for UNHCR Partner Organisations (adjusted)



The difficulties in diversifying income will be addressed in the following section, which will analyse the extent of access in Romania to various potential sources of funding.

UNHCR

UNHCR represents 43% of overall sources for NGO partners, or 54% when the operational partner JRS (who receives no funds from UNHCR) is removed. The transition from 100% UNHCR funding to accessing alternative sources of funds has proved difficult for some partner NGOs. For example, one partner continues to be 100% funded by UNHCR.

European Union

In the refugee sector, it is expected that the withdrawal of foreign donors will be balanced by the newly available access to EU funds. In particular, the European Refugee Fund is expected to be a valuable source of funding for NGO partners, replacing UNHCR support. On the basis of this assumption, and consultations with the Romanian authorities, the UNHCR Romania Country Operation Plans for 2008 were established with the expectation that ERFII funds would provide for a number of activities previously supported by UNHCR in the fields of social and legal assistance.

However, although the European Commission approved Romania's multi-annual and annual plans for ERFII in August 2007, the legislative framework required in order to receive the funds was not yet in place. Thus, the deadline for dispersal of funds (end of 2007) expired and partner NGOs could not access this valuable financial resource. The implications of this unexpected loss were significant, as all NGOs interviewed had planned project activities based on the anticipated funds and some had also planned to hire new staff. The only NGO who was able to avoid cancelling these plans was SC, who diverted non-earmarked funds from other sources. Most other partner NGOs encountered more significant difficulties; for example UNHCR funding to one NGO had been reduced in the expectation that salaries for three key positions would be covered by the ERF. Given that this funding has not materialised, these positions are now compromised, unless alternative sources are identified.

Regarding expectations for access to ERFIII funding, it should be noted that further legislative reforms are still required in order for Romania to receive these funds. Although in February 2008, the required legislation establishing the responsibility authorities for dispersal of the

fund was approved (398/168/2008 Joint Ministerial Order of the Minister of Interior and Administrative Reform and of the Minister of Economy and Finance), further legislative changes are required in order to establish a grants procedure. The expected amount that will be available from ERFIII will be smaller than other EU Member States due to the smaller number of annual asylum applications. The NGOs interviewed anticipated applying for a grant of between 30,000 and 100,000 euro from ERFIII for 2008. Should their applications succeed, this would allow for continuation of valuable social and legal activities, and strategic planning of future activities, based on a more stable funding source.

However, several NGOs expressed concern over access to ERFIII regarding the condition to obtain matching funds. Preliminary discussions between UNHCR and the Romanian Immigration Office (RIO) have indicated that the existing legislative framework would not allow for matching funds to be provided by RIO. Although the Romanian authorities have discussed a number of possibilities for providing matching funds, these would all require changes in the legislation, and are therefore not guaranteed for assisting NGOs' access to the first round of ERFII funds. Given the difficulties encountered by partner NGOs with diversifying funding sources, the matching funds requirement may act as an obstacle to accessing the funds.

Should NGOs experience difficulties in accessing ERF 2008, it is likely to be highly detrimental to their overall capacity. Given that UNHCR operational plans are constructed in advance, with the expectation that various services will be provided for by the ERF, the failure to access this fund will leave a large gap in essential services provision. Indeed, for one NGO in particular, which is currently fully supported by UNHCR, the consequences are likely to be somewhat more serious.

In addition to difficulties in accessing the ERF due to matching funds, it should be noted that partner NGOs will enter in competition for these funds with other eligible applicants, such as local authorities. As the asylum system is still relatively young in Romania, the authorities will understandably wish to use a large portion of resources to build capacity within local authorities in the reception and integration fields. Although this competition is healthy and is to be expected, it may result in less financial resources being awarded to partner NGOs.

In addition to the ERF, there are alternative sources of EU funding that NGOs may draw upon. Currently, NGOs receive an average of 8% of their finances from these funds. Successful applications have been attributed to established cross-border partnerships and information flow whilst the main difficulty was bureaucracy and complicated reporting obligations. However, there is still a need for more diverse and sustainable funding in order to cover expenses such as the core costs of running NGOs.

Government

Support for the NGO sector from the Romanian authorities has increased in recent years from a negligible amount, to a small proportion of NGO income (approximately 5%). Concerning partner NGOs, this amount is slightly higher, at 9%, which is largely obtained from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities. This percentage is still relatively low in comparison to NGO sectors in other EU Member States (20% Slovakia; 30% Sweden, Norway; 40% Czech Republic; >70% Belgium, Ireland).

The gradual increase in government funding in recent years is in part due to the following legislative reforms, which have brought increased potential for the Romanian authorities to support the NGO sector:

- Government Ordinance 68/2003 allowing for services and partnerships contracts.
- Law 34/1998 regarding providing subsidies for Romanian associations and foundations in the field of social assistance.
- Law 350/2005 providing a legal framework for the financing of non-profit entities through public funds
- Government Ordinance 34/2006 allowing for NGOs to be considered as the bearers of public acquisitions, construction or services contracts.

Whilst the above-mentioned laws have certainly improved the possibilities for government support of the NGO sector, there have been criticisms of inconsistent application. In applying for government funds, a recent survey of NGOs found that lack of transparency, clarity and bureaucracy were all primary obstacles²⁰. During interviews, NGOs partners stated that the main difficulty in accessing government funds was the fact that authorities do not have procedures in place yet to analyse project proposals.

Regarding the main areas that receive funds from the Government, statistics show that support has been largely distributed to projects related to “national interest programmes” in the sectors of youth, anti-discrimination and organisations representing Romanians abroad²¹, which UNHCR NGO partners often do not easily qualify for. In order to obtain such funding, NGOs must present refugee projects in their relation to national programmes of interest (e.g. child protection/education, anti-discrimination), without compromising on the mission of the NGO.

Although surveys show that currently Government support for NGOs is still below the level required to allow NGOs to fulfil their capacity in addressing the needs of the communities²², it is hoped that contributions will increase in the future. In particular, the potential for the contracting of services may provide a significant income for NGOs in the social sector. Although it has been documented that the contracting of services can sometimes be seen as a threat to the preservation of jobs and structures of governmental departments in Romania²³, the refugee sector may prove to be more open to this due to the particular specialisations of the NGOs. For example, the possibility of contracting social services for integration may be provided by the Government through the ERF.

Private sector

Forming a total of 8%, or 0.5% with SC data extracted, funding from the private sector does not represent a significant proportion of partner NGOs’ income. This is reflective of the general lack of private donor funding for the NGO sector in Romania, which is also characterised by its volatility and is not evenly spread across the whole NGO sector²⁴. In a similar way to Government support, NGOs working in particular fields benefit from philanthropic support more than others. For example, the proportion of individual giving oriented towards the religious field is three times larger than that oriented towards social

²⁰ Burada, V., Berceanu, D., Peterscu, C. (2007) Analiza Mecanismelor De Finantare Directa De La Bugetul De Stat Pentru Organizatii Neguvernamentale In Romania. FDSC: Civil Society Development Foundation, Romania and CENTRAS: Centre for Assistance for Non-Government Organisations..

²¹ Burada, V., Berceanu, D., Peterscu, C. (2007). Supra note 22

²² Ana Bălaşa, (2004). Supra note 12

²³ Burada, V., Berceanu, D., Peterscu, C. (2007). Supra note 22

²⁴ Saulean, D. & Epure, C. Civil Society Development Foundation. (1998) Defining The Nonprofit Sector: Romania. Working Papers Of The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

services, with contributions to research, culture and arts, environmental protection or human rights almost negligible.²⁵ This may explain the lack of private sector funding in the refugee field, which is not yet seen as an “attractive” field for donors.

Despite recent attempts by the Government to ease the process for private donation, through a programme allowing 2% of individual income tax to be donated to charity, the results are still very poor (only 8.6% of individuals donated in this way) and philanthropic tendencies are yet to develop²⁶. Indeed, a recent study investigating philanthropy in Romania found that only 44% of the population makes charity donations (the majority of which are to the church)²⁷.

Therefore, for organisations working in the refugee field in Romania, individual giving cannot yet be relied upon as a significant source of finance. This is in contrast to most other EU Member States, where individual supporters, or members often provide a steady financial base, on which NGOs can plan their activities (for example 90% of the population makes charitable donations in the Netherlands)²⁸. This can be attributed to a general lack of trust in NGOs, coupled with the fact that economic reform is an ongoing process and average salaries are not yet at a level that permits most individuals to give generously²⁹.

Similarly, the business sector in Romania is also lagging behind other European States regarding contributions, with only 39% making charitable donations³⁰. A very small proportion of partner NGOs financial resources come from business donations, primarily international firms. When consulted, all NGOs reported that previous attempts to approach Romanian firms were largely met with indifference or disinterest. Indeed, studies show that in general, NGOs in Romania receive only 7% of overall funds from the business sector³¹.

Most of the support that is provided by businesses is in the form of in-kind donations or one-off contributions in return for publicity. In addition, NGOs stated that successful fundraising initiatives in the private sector were largely a result of the good will of individuals in the private sector, and therefore relationships with donors were relatively fragile. It would appear that, in general, there is a lack of dialogue and developed partnerships between NGOs and potential business donors.

Despite this documented lack of philanthropic tendencies in Romanian society, one notable exception can be found in the generous response to the flooding that occurred in 2000. It is estimated that donations of goods worth \$6 million were collected in two days following a public appeal³², showing that the potential exists for large-scale public donations when media partnerships are used effectively.

In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that the trend may be changing, as an increasing number of businesses are keen to display corporate social responsibility. Recent times have seen an increase in the amount of funding from private companies, particularly the larger

²⁵ Saulean, D. & Epure, C. (1998) Supra note 26.

²⁶ Burada, V., Berceanu, D., Peterscu, C. (2007). Supra note 22

²⁷ Romanian’s Generosity: Philanthropy Among Individuals and the Business Sector, Association for Community Relations, 2003.

²⁸ Association for Community Relations (2003). Supra note 29

²⁹ According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2007. The monthly average earning in Romania in 2005 was 200 Euros, whilst the poverty rate was 15.6 and the extreme poverty rate 4.7.

³⁰ Association for Community Relations (2003). Supra note 29

³¹ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

³² Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

multinational or Romanian companies. For example, in 2006, a total of 6.7 million Euros were channelled to NGOs through an initiative by the Association for Community Relations and the American House of Commerce. However, as partner NGOs stated that the biggest obstacle to accessing funds from the private sector is the lack of awareness amongst the population about the needs of refugees (i.e. the “popularity” of the field), there is clearly a need for awareness building before significant contributions can be expected.

Other foreign sources

As funding from individuals, private companies and the state have been largely limited in recent years, there has been a tendency for partner NGOs to look towards foreign-based grants to compliment UNHCR support³³. However, many of the long-standing foreign donors in Romania have recently pulled out due to the 2007 EU accession. This withdrawal of foreign donors from Romania has created a minor crisis amongst the NGO sector, particularly amongst larger NGOs whose primary source was in the form of grants³⁴.

Predictions in this field indicate that the reduction in foreign donors will continue, with fewer grants of larger amounts remaining for specific fields such as child welfare, community and social development³⁵. The tendency to be overly reliant upon foreign sources of funding has been documented across the region³⁶, and represents a danger particularly to Romanian NGOs whilst no significant alternative source of funding is identified. Regarding partner NGOs, a total of 30% of overall funds are from foreign sources, the second largest source after UNHCR. Given the expected reductions in both these sources, this lack of diversity in sources is likely to cause difficulties in the near future should alternative sources of funding fail to arise.

Marketing and awareness building

Due to the need to diversify sources, and in particular to raise awareness amongst communities, the level of marketing and awareness building was measured as a factor of financial capacity. It was found that few organisations had an established marketing strategy, which was mainly due to a lack of human resources in this field. The ability of the NGO to build awareness of its activities is thought to be linked to two previously-mentioned factors: the poor public image of the NGO sector in general and the lack of awareness of refugee issues in Romania. However, these challenges may yet be overcome as partner NGOs develop, expand and increase their human resources, enabling them to produce marketing strategies.

Conclusions and recommendations on financial capacity

The difficulties faced by NGO partners in accessing diverse and sustainable funding sources are likely to have an immediate impact on their beneficiaries, that is persons of concern to UNHCR in Romania. If the financial base of these organisations continues to decline, then the reduction in essential services such as social assistance and free legal advice, as well as the drop in advocacy and lobbying, will cause a gap in the protection of persons of concern.

³³ Dialogue for civil society. Report on the state of civil society in Romania, 2005. CIVICUS, civil society index, civil society development foundation, Romania.

³⁴ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

³⁵ Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) Supra note 14

³⁶ Increasing Financial Sustainability and Capacity of CSOs in Moldova, Concept Note. Geoffrey D. Prewitt, Poverty Reduction and Civil Society Advisor, Bratislava Regional Center, UNDP

The lack of sustainable and diverse funding, and the over reliance on both UNHCR and foreign, project based donors poses difficulties to NGOs in covering core costs, which reduces the overall capacity of the NGO. The difficulties encountered with potential funding sources are also affected by the shortfall in human resources allocated for fundraising purposes and therefore the lack of well-established fundraising strategies.

However, despite these difficulties, there are some areas that promise improvement in the financial capacity of partner NGOs. In particular, the partnerships that have been formed with UNHCR, the Government and foreign-based NGOs may provide opportunities for increasing access to funds. Partnerships with UNHCR provide a form of recognition to NGOs in the field, which all have a good track record of UNHCR project implementation and are highly specialised in their fields. This, coupled with the good relations that partner NGOs have with the Romanian authorities should assist NGOs in accessing future ERF or Government funds. In addition, many NGOs have forged valuable partnerships in other countries, which either currently assist in accessing funds or have the potential to do so.

A number of recommendations can be made, based on the identified strengths, including building on and further utilising existing partnerships. The partnership with UNHCR can be utilised to improve the public image and status of NGOs amongst the governmental and private sectors. This could be further enhanced by providing a mark of official recognition, such as certificates or awards, which could be presented at an event to introduce potential individual and corporate donors to partner NGOs. The partnership with the Government could be utilised by entering into further dialogue in order to align NGO activities with national action plans or agendas, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful grant applications. In a similar fashion to UNHCR, the relevant Romanian authorities could also take a greater role in encouraging private donors through recognition of NGO contributions in the respective field (i.e. asylum and migration).

There is also a clear need for training and technical support, on fundraising, particularly in the areas of approaching private sector donors, accessing alternative EU funds, alongside the ERF and introducing income-generating activities. Indeed NGO partners have expressed interest in such training on several occasions³⁷. For example, funding from the business sector may be increased through the development of a long-term strategy (the only organization with a significant source from the private sector stated that this funding was very much dependent on long-term, continual and sustained dialogue with the sector). Currently, no NGO receives an income from fees for services, in comparison to the overall NGO sector in Romania, which obtains 12% of finances from such activities³⁸. Training and assistance would enable partner NGOs to tap in to this unexplored source of income, for example through micro-finance programmes or by charging for specialised training services.

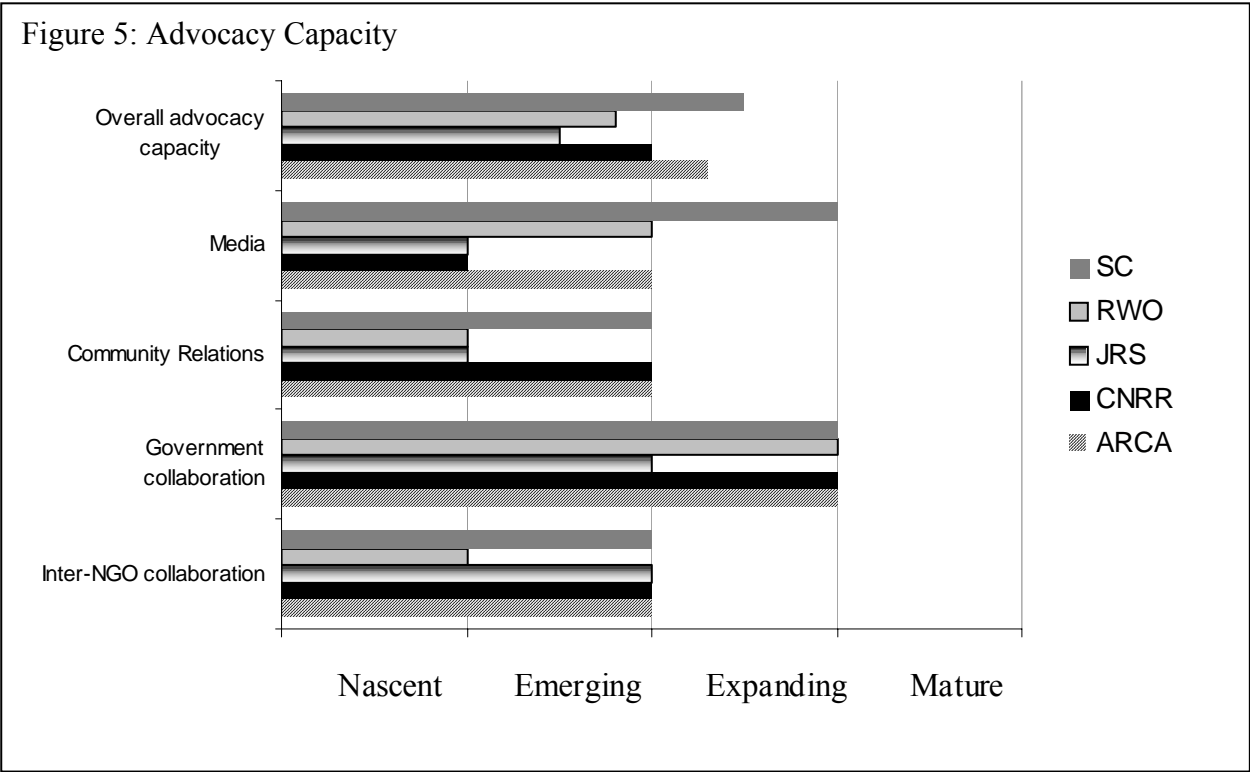
Advocacy capacity

Another important element affecting partner NGOs' ability to fulfil responsibilities in the field of protection is their capacity to lobby the Romanian authorities and advocate on behalf of refugees. In order to maintain a stable protection climate, the NGO sector must be capable of taking on a watchdog role, ensuring favourable policy is maintained and new legislative

³⁷ NGO partners have expressed their interest and need for further NGO capacity building mainly in the fundraising area at various meetings throughout 2007 at UNHCR premises.

³⁸ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

developments are to the benefit of refugees. Partner NGOs are crucial in allowing the government to form strategy based on the needs of refugees, by providing a vital link to the refugee community. As can be seen from the overall advocacy capacity ratings in the graph below, three organisations rated themselves as “emerging” and two as “expanding”. This suggests that, in general, partner NGOs require additional assistance in the area of advocacy. This chapter will consider the advocacy capacity of partner NGOs in relation to the results for each component of advocacy capacity: a) Inter-NGO collaboration, b) Government collaboration, c) Community Relations, d) Media.



Inter-NGO collaboration

Research has shown that civil society organisations are less likely to be organised or grouped into formal coalitions in Romania than in Western European States³⁹. Indeed, a recent report highlighted that “examples of genuine partnership are rare” amongst NGOs and reported the “need to overcome the strong individualism amongst NGOs in order to improve sectoral working, representation and image”⁴⁰. Lack of financial and human resources have been quoted as the reasons why informal methods of cooperation are often preferred.

Results of this study show that UNHCR partner NGOs are considerably more developed than the suggested national level regarding inter-NGO collaboration. Four out of five NGOs provided examples of policy changes that had come about as a result of lobbying activities conducted in partnership with other NGOs. Examples given include issues related to vulnerable persons, medical insurance, integration and resettlement. In addition, four out of

³⁹ Dialogue for civil society. Report on the state of civil society in Romania, 2005. CIVICUS, Civil Society Index, Civil Society Development Foundation, Romania.

⁴⁰ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

five NGOs belong to international networks and all five belong to local networks, such as working groups and task forces.

However, despite such clear examples of good cooperation between NGOs, organisations still rated themselves as “emerging” or “expanding” regarding inter-NGO collaboration. This is likely to be because most of the cooperation between NGOs is externally initiated. In particular, many collaborative efforts had been formed on the initiative of UNHCR or take place informally through communication at UNHCR-related events. In addition, one NGO commented that many of the meetings at which collaborative efforts take place also include representatives of governmental and other sectors. Whilst this may be useful for building relations and conducting lobbying, there is also a need for an environment in which the NGO sector can gather exclusively, to allow for discussion and planning of united advocacy/lobbying activities. The lack of an official forum or coalition from which NGOs can form a united voice, particularly on legislation and implementation of legislation, could be preventing them from reaching their full advocacy potential.

Governmental collaboration

Once more, results show that partner NGOs are more developed regarding government collaboration than the national level indicated by previous studies. Whilst the relationship between the NGO sector and the Romanian authorities has been described as showing “mutual lack of trust” and “an absence of political attention for NGOs”⁴¹, in contrast, UNHCR partner NGOs describe their relationship with the authorities as good or very good.

NGOs mostly rated themselves as “expanding” in this section, suggesting that they have a track record of achievement. In this respect, there are several positive examples of co-operation between partner NGOs and the Romanian authorities. Four out of five NGOs considered that they had influenced policy or legislation addressing protection issues. All organisations had been consulted during the making of the new legislation on their particular area of expertise, with examples including the asylum law, integration law and law related to child protection and education⁴².

However, despite this good track record, there are some factors that act as limitations on collaboration with government and lobbying activities. As in the inter-NGO collaboration component, initiatives regarding government collaboration often originate outside the NGO sector. For example, discussions frequently occur as a result of requests from the Romanian authorities for consultation regarding new legislation or policy. However, the fact that this good will exists should not exclude NGOs from collectively lobbying over issues that were not raised by the authorities themselves, such as issues regarding implementation of current legislation. In addition, the presence of UNHCR has often been a significant factor in the dialogue between partner NGOs and the Romanian authorities. Although such tri-partite discussions are important for development of legislation, NGOs may also need to increase independent advocacy initiatives as their responsibilities in the field of protection increase.

Another important factor in advocacy capacity is the government level at which the advocacy initiative is aimed. Whilst there is a good history of collaboration between NGOs and the Romanian authorities specialised in the relevant field (Romanian Immigration Office), as government becomes increasingly decentralised the need has arisen to develop relations at the local government level.

⁴¹ Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) *Supra* note 14

⁴² Law 122/2006 regarding asylum in Romania.

Community relations

One component of advocacy capacity in which partner NGOs rated themselves slightly lower was community relations. All NGOs stated that collaborative efforts with other sectors of the community, both private and public were relatively under-developed. Whilst some NGO has formed good relations with particular groups as project beneficiaries, it was recognised that these relationships are largely dependent on the specific project, rather than long-term established relationships.

As can be seen in the management results section, there is a need for increased consultation with local communities of asylum-seekers and refugees. Although participatory assessments are currently carried out within the framework of UNHCR partnerships, NGOs should consider building on this by creating independent consultatory forums, where refugees and asylum-seekers themselves can contribute meaningfully to advocacy initiatives.

The media

In order effectively advocate with media, NGOs must be able to promote a positive image to the public and therefore receive support from society. As Romanian society is particularly sceptical regarding the NGO sector, it is important that the public see the positive impact of the NGO's activities. However, studies show that, even when NGOs in Romania are involved in successful activities, they generally experience difficulties in receiving positive media coverage⁴³.

Such difficulties have been encountered by partner NGOs, who reported relatively little press coverage in 2007, with the majority appearing less than ten times throughout the year. With the exception of SC, who received extensive coverage due to their already famous name, all other partner NGOs felt that they were not well known to the general public.

For some partner NGOs, the negative experiences between the NGO sector in Romania and the media in the past acts as a call to caution regarding use of the media. One NGO in particular recounted the experience of having been misrepresented by the media following an interview. Despite this caution, three out of five partner NGOs had established relations or partners in the media. In addition, although most partner NGOs stated that the media is generally more interested in covering individual human-interest stories, one NGO stated that they felt media interest in refugee issues in general had increased in the past year.

Regarding use of the media for advocacy activities, research shows that relations between the NGO sector and the media differ somewhat in Romania from older EU member States. Studies show that the media is generally better at covering events and that there is very limited use for advocacy purposes⁴⁴. There appears to be a general attitude that diplomacy and consultation with authorities is preferable to attracting media attention to a particular unresolved issue. In general, partner NGOs do not show tendencies to use media for specific advocacy issues, but rather for general public image or awareness raising purposes.

⁴³ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

⁴⁴ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

Conclusions and recommendations on advocacy capacity

Whilst results show that partner NGOs are more advanced in the areas of Inter-NGO collaboration and Government collaboration, there is still a tendency towards reliance on UNHCR for networking and advocacy activities in these areas. Although collaboration with UNHCR on advocacy issues is important and can strengthen such initiatives, there is also a need for NGOs to initiate and conduct both inter-NGO and government lobbying activities independently. In addition, there appears to be a need to develop stronger relations with both communities and the media for more effective advocacy.

The following recommendations can be made on the basis of the findings related to advocacy capacity. Partner NGOs may be hindered from reaching their full advocacy capacity due to the lack of an NGO-initiated coalition or network. The establishment of such a network could allow partner NGOs to reach the advocacy capacity required to take a leading role in protection issues. If partner NGOs are to have a strong, concerted voice in advocating for the protection of persons of concern, the responsibility for such a network must lie with the NGO sector.

In addition, results suggest that NGOs are ready to take on a more active role in initiating lobbying activities, and such a network could provide a platform for this. Indeed, interview responses show a desire for NGOs to collaborate more on lobbying and monitoring of legislation. In addition, such a network could be used for consultation with refugee communities for the purposes of advocacy activities.

In order for these initiatives to be successfully implemented, NGOs themselves have stated that there is a need for training in advocacy and lobbying. Such training could build capacity not only to advocate for refugees at the national level, but also prepare NGOs to further utilise their regional networks for advocacy at the EU level.

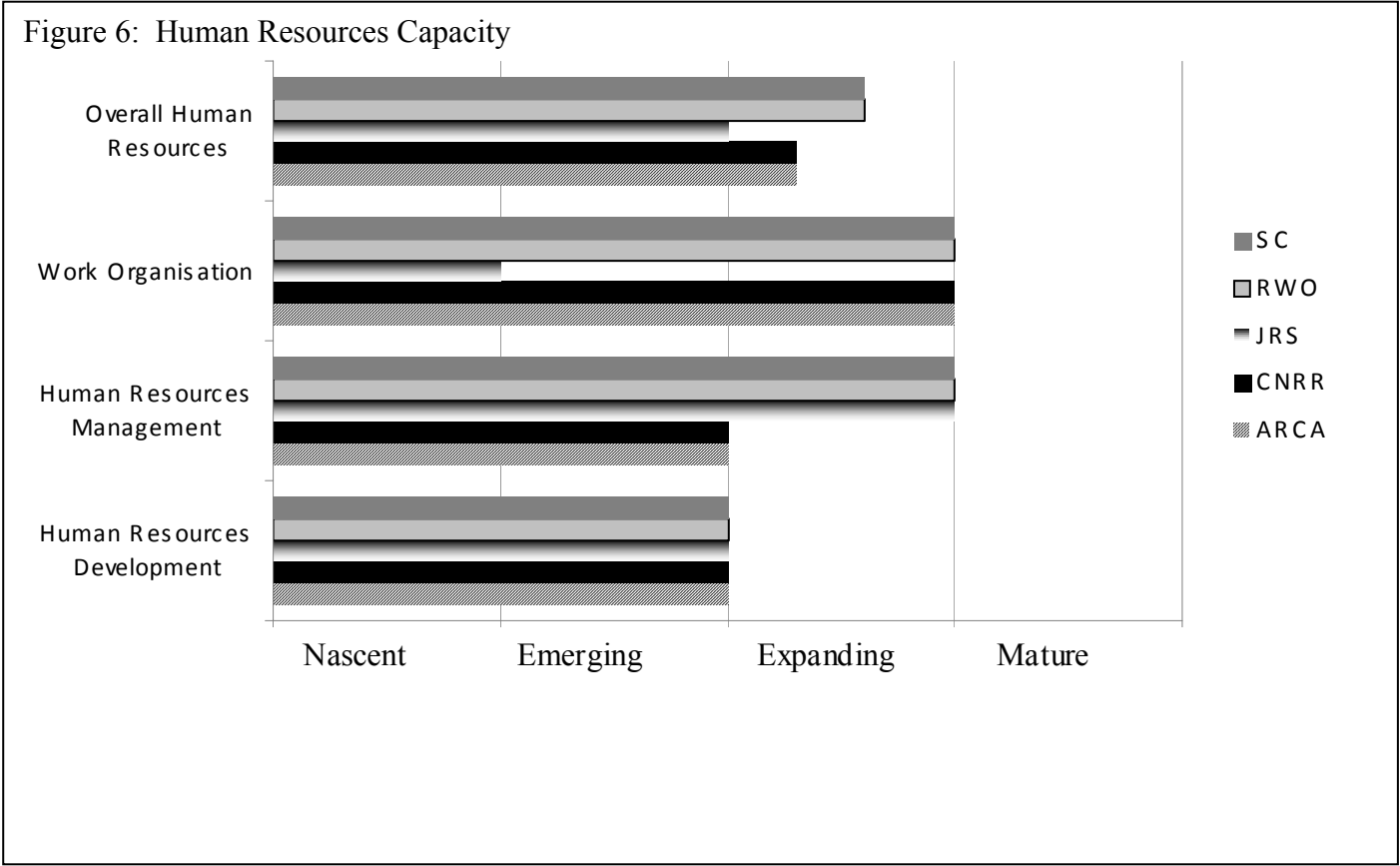
Another measure that could assist in governmental collaboration would be the appointment of an individual from the Romanian Immigration Office to act as a focal point for NGO relations. Recent changes and reforms in governmental structures, coupled with the reliance on individual relations for government collaboration suggest that NGOs would benefit from such a move.

Regarding use of the media for advocacy purposes, the difficulties experienced by NGOs in developing media relations could be addressed if NGOs were to receive further training in public relations. Indeed, one NGO with particularly good media relations still stated that they were aware of their lack of an established strategy for approaching media and that they would benefit from training in this field.

Human resources capacity

The capacity of partner organizations to attract and retain well-qualified professionals is critical for their ability to undertake an increasingly important role in refugee protection. Results of the Assessment Tool indicate that human resources capacity represents one of the strengths of partner NGOs, with the highest ratings being obtained on this section. All partner NGOs were rated as “expanding”, showing that the NGOs have a track record of achievement but could do with improvement.

The average number of staff employed at partner NGOs was 13, although this number reduces to five when the organisation SC is factored out.



As it would be advantageous to increase this number, and to draw good quality candidates, it is vital the NGOs are seen as an attractive place to work. There are a number of factors related to the attractiveness of the NGO, which are outlined below:

Public image

Although there are an increasing number of specialized, trained individuals employed in the refugee field, the negative perception of the NGO sector by the rest of society persists, thereby discouraging potential candidates from applying for positions. Unlike in some other EU countries, there is little social acknowledgment for work performed in the NGO sector⁴⁵. Positive aspects of working in an NGO, such as the more open and participatory work environment are often not recognised.

Financial resources

As previously mentioned, some of the lack of financial capacity can be attributed to a lack of human resources available for fundraising purposes. Likewise, the lack of financial resources also has a negative effect on human resources. Without sufficient finances, the NGO will be unable to provide fundraising positions, and to offer salaries that will attract a good standard of candidates. Most partner NGOs stated that they consider their salaries comparable or better than the public sector, but that it is much harder to compete with the private sector. Indeed,

⁴⁵ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3

the difficulty that NGOs in Romania have in retaining staff was documented in a recent study stating that many NGOs “suffered from an inability to retain well-qualified staff who leave the sector for jobs in business that offer better salaries and career development opportunities.”⁴⁶ However, partner NGOs would appear to differ slightly from the findings of this study regarding staff development opportunities and human resources management, areas in which they received higher ratings.

Human resources development and management

Regarding staff development, it was found that approximately 70% of staff have participated in in-country or foreign skills enhancement over the past year, showing that NGOs are keen to maximize the potential of existing employees through training. Although the majority of NGOs had no formal policies established for providing incentives or rewards to staff, examples of functional systems include the provision of certificates and awards for good work.

Similarly, whilst policies exist in human resources management (e.g. for recruitment and promotion), many were yet to be established in written form. One example of good practice in this area was a partnership that had been formed between an NGO and a private firm for recruitment of managerial positions, ensuring objective standards are used in new appointments. It was also found that staff and work were sufficiently well organised to implement ongoing projects as well as address any special refugee-related issues that may arise during the year.

Conclusions and recommendations on human resources capacity

The situation of partner NGOs regarding human resources is somewhat reflective of the general NGO sector in Romania, as it has been recognised that NGOs in Romania need both financial and technical support in order to provide professional competence and training, attract new people and maintain skilled staff⁴⁷. However, partner NGOs show more highly developed human resources development and management systems, with examples of good practice evident. Areas that may benefit from further attention include the establishment of formal policies and the expansion of incentive or reward schemes.

As human resources capacity represents a strength of partner NGOs, it is recommended that they continue to actively pursue the training and staff development systems that are in place. In addition, as all partner NGOs currently accept volunteers, furthering volunteer management would allow NGOs to maximise the potential of this valuable source. Although financial resources limit the extent to which NGOs are able to offer incentives to staff, examples of good practice in finding alternative solutions to this could be shared amongst NGOs (e.g. providing awards and certificates in recognition of good work).

Management capacity

In order for partner NGOs to absorb a larger role in refugee protection, the organisational structure and the ability of the organisation to form strategies and policies that are based on the needs of refugees are of great importance. Three partner organisations were rated as

⁴⁶ Dakova, D., Dreossi, B., Hyatt, J & Socolovschi, A (2000). Supra note 3 Also see Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) Supra note 14, which talks of the “brain drain” from NGO to business sector

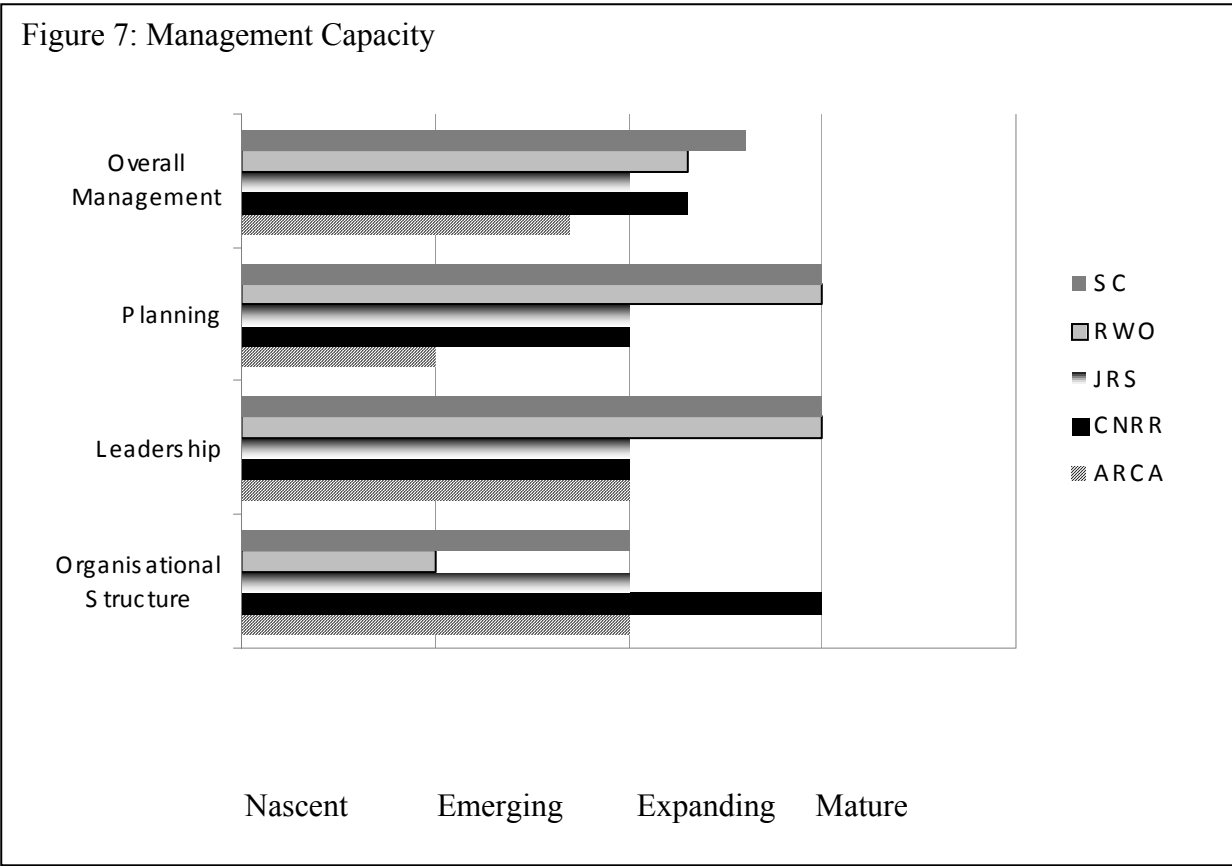
⁴⁷ Porumb, A., Gheorghe, C., Lazar, C & Pirtoc, D. (2001) Supra note 14

“expanding”, and two as “emerging” in relation to management capacity, suggesting that, overall management is reasonably well developed, but that there is still a need for some development in this field.

It should be noted that assessment of the management capacity of partner NGOs was slightly hindered due to the fact that some organizations were, at the time of interview, undergoing a change in management, and were experiencing difficulties in recruiting persons with the skills required for the position. However, the following conclusions can be drawn based on the interviews conducted:

Regarding the structure of the organization, four out of five NGOs had a clear organizational structure, elaborated in a chart or document. All organizations had formally established who constitutes management and who is responsible for work plans, allowing for clear and transparent management policies.

Results for strategic planning showed that all five organizations were participatory and democratic in their approach to management, involving both management and employees in the decision-making process. However, it is to be noted that no organization claimed to formally involve stakeholders (beneficiaries) in the making of decisions. Whilst organizations undoubtedly consult beneficiaries during project implementation, the lack of formal involvement could be seen to have a negative effect on accountability.



Conclusions and recommendations on management capacity

Results of interviews suggested that, whilst organizational structure is relatively well-defined, involvement of both staff and beneficiaries in setting the direction of the NGO and

determining policies and procedures was variable and could be increased. Given the small number of staff working in the NGOs, the extent to which individuals can take on strategic planning roles is limited, when they are occupied with project implementation, service provision and sometimes also fundraising tasks. Nevertheless, an increased involvement of staff and beneficiaries is recommended if NGOs are to formulate strategy through a bottom-up, participatory process, allowing them to ensure both accountability and the relevance of interventions to beneficiaries.

It would therefore be beneficial for regular, formal consultations to be held with both staff and beneficiaries. Involving beneficiaries in strategic planning would provide the additional impact of improving the image of the NGO to the community with which they are working.

In order to achieve this, staff will most likely require further training. Indeed, one NGO stated that capacity building in the past might have been focused too much on project implementation skills and not enough on leadership, which has been overlooked as an area of training. Another NGO emphasised their desire to participate in capacity building initiatives in the field of management and leadership.

Final conclusions

The aim of the current review is to examine the stage at which UNHCR Romania's partner NGOs are as regards their capacity to undertake increasing responsibility in the field of protection. Overall, partner NGOs rated well, especially considering the youth of the refugee NGO sector. Four NGOs received an overall rating of "emerging" and one of "expanding", suggesting that the refugee NGO sector is still in development and would benefit from capacity building/training. Such an initiative would ensure that partner NGOs are fully prepared for the increased level of responsibility envisioned by UNHCR.

It was found that financial and advocacy capacity represent areas where partner NGOs are least developed, and would therefore stand to gain the most from capacity building initiatives. In particular, regarding financial capacity, partner NGOs encountered difficulties in accessing sustainable and diverse funding, with an over reliance on both UNHCR and foreign, project-based donors and unexpected delays in accessing the European Refugee Fund. Should the financial base of partner NGOs continue to decline, the accompanying reduction in social and legal services, and advocacy and lobbying activities, may lead to a gap in the protection of persons of concern. It is therefore suggested that caution be exercised in formulating UNHCR operational plans on the assumption that services will be covered by NGOs' access to alternative funding sources, such as the European Refugee Fund or private donors.

Regarding the advocacy capacity of partner NGOs, it was found that although all NGOs displayed a good level of inter-NGO and Government collaboration, there was once more an over-reliance on UNHCR for initiating advocacy activities. In addition, most partner NGOs had experienced difficulties in receiving media coverage, with media relations requiring further development and little use of media for advocacy purposes. Capacity building in the field of advocacy is therefore needed in order for partner NGOs to take a lead role in ensuring a positive development of policy and legislation in the field of protection.

This review found several factors external to partner NGOs, that are particular to Romania, which contribute to the difficulties experienced in developing financial and advocacy capacity. Specifically, in comparison to older EU Member States, it was found that the NGO sector in Romania suffers from a lack of support from society, due to historical reasons and a lack of positive media coverage. In addition, Romania lacks the traditional culture of

philanthropy that exists in many older EU Member States and average salaries are at a lower level, making it more difficult to develop financial capacity through the private sector. Finally, due to the smaller number of asylum-seekers in Romania, the topic of refugees or immigration in general does not usually form a part of the public debate, with issues such as economic development, healthcare and internal politics receiving more media attention. This also poses a challenge to partner NGOs in drawing attention to and gathering support for their activities for financial or advocacy purposes.

Nevertheless, despite the above-mentioned difficulties, many of these external factors, and also other internal factors in partner NGOs can be addressed by capacity building initiatives. Some of these initiatives are outlined in the recommendations below, particularly related to the role that UNHCR may take in capacity building.

As it has been recognised that partner NGOs experience difficulties in receiving media attention and attracting public support, perhaps one of the most significant contributions by UNHCR could be to further utilise its strong public image. This could be achieved through providing a mark of official recognition or accreditation for examples of good practice amongst partner NGOs, which may be awarded at an event. In addition to attracting media attention, this could make donations more manageable for private donors by increasing their understanding of NGOs' projects. If such an initiative were to be conducted in coordination with other UN agencies in Romania (for example through a joint award ceremony), it would be likely to attract an even higher media coverage and maximise opportunities for the NGOs involved.

In addition, the results of this review show that partner NGOs would benefit from training in all four of the capacity areas measured (financial, advocacy, human resources and management capacity). In this respect, UNHCR could also assist partner NGOs in locating and approaching potential sources of technical support and training. Although there has been a documented decrease in training and capacity building programmes in Romania with the gradual removal of foreign donors (CSM review), there still remain a number of potential sources. For example, it may be possible to arrange for a transfer of skills through exchange schemes from NGOs in older EU Member States to partner NGOs in Romania.

In addition, there are also a number of well-developed NGOs within Romania that, whilst not working directly in the field of refugee assistance, could nevertheless offer training or share examples of good practice. In addition, private businesses in Romania that are not yet ready to provide financial support may be willing to offer free-of-charge technical assistance or consultancy services instead. Once more, such capacity building initiatives may benefit from the coordination of UNHCR with other UN agencies in Romania, in order to pool resources and provide joint initiatives for NGOs across different sectors.

In considering these capacity building initiatives, it may be useful to bear in mind a number of principles that were outlined in a report produced by the Romanian Association for Community Relations, out of which, the following three principles may be considered as of relevance to UNHCR and its partner NGOs⁴⁸:

⁴⁸ Trust for Civil Society Report of the Consultation Process in Romania May-August 2004. Association for Community Relations, p29.

Continuation principle: learn from previous work of donors in the area of NGO sector development and strengthening.

Transfer of responsibility principle: Avoid patterns of dependency and paternalism and stimulate decision making at the level of those who own the problem.

Flexibility principle: Allow and encourage flexibility in approaches based on results of monitoring and evaluations to continue to respond to needs as they change or are better defined.

In conclusion, given the documented need for development of capacity amongst partner NGOs in several key areas, the above-mentioned capacity-building initiatives may prove invaluable to their operational ability, and consequently the future protection climate for UNHCR persons of concern in Romania. Should such initiatives take place, it is also recommended that a repeat organisational capacity assessment be conducted on a yearly basis, in order to observe the efficacy of these initiatives and the progress that partner NGOs have achieved.