

Dorcas *Romania*

Empowering individuals
and strengthening local
communities



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We are Dorcas

Dorcas is a faith-based organisation that provides humanitarian assistance and facilitates development cooperation. We invest in sustainable change in the lives of people who are marginalised. In the event of poverty, exclusion or a crisis, we create opportunities for them to flourish.

What we believe

We believe in the value and God-given potential of every single person. We are called to demonstrate God's love for those in need. This is how we follow Jesus Christ.

What we see

We see a world where poverty, exclusion and crisis marginalise people. We also see the potential of these people and their communities to flourish despite their difficult circumstances.

How we work

Accountable: We do what we say, work transparently and use resources wisely.

Compassionate: We see those in need and stand next to them.

Determined: We have an entrepreneurial spirit and do not give up.

Locally led: We work through local leadership, staff and partners.

What we do

We empower people who are marginalised to develop their talents. And we enable disadvantaged communities to flourish. We equip individuals and communities to promote and ensure participation of all.

We create hope and long-term perspectives in volatile and complex situations. We meet people's basic needs in times of crisis and increase their ability to

overcome poverty and exclusion. We persist despite frequent setbacks and invest in durable relationships to realise sustainable change.

We are part of a global movement of individuals and organisations working for a just and fair world. We recognise and appreciate everybody who supports our work. And we actively partner with others to create synergy and amplify our impact.

Theory of Change

Dorcas views poverty as a condition in which people cannot realise their intellectual, material, physical, social and spiritual needs and capacities. This kind of poverty is often related to exclusion mechanisms and barriers within society. We want to contribute to the protection, inclusion and resilience of people living in poverty, experiencing exclusion or caught in a crisis. Our Theory of Change recognises that transformation is needed at the individual, community and societal levels. We seek to realise a six-fold impact that results in flourishing people and communities.

Dorcas works towards change on three levels:

1. Individual

We create opportunities for people and, if necessary, we also provide for their basic needs.

2. Community

We invest in resilient, self-organising communities; we strengthen the position of certain groups, such as older people, people with disabilities and minority groups, and we encourage community members to support each other and stand up for themselves.

3. Society

We cooperate with local authorities and partners and motivate them to take their responsibilities. We tackle taboos by ensuring that everyone has a voice and that everyone is included.

The Dorcas Theory of Change is translated into programme concepts that create impact,

demonstrate our added value and inform the programmatic priorities set by each Country Office.

The three programme concepts are:

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery

Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery focuses on saving people's lives and preserving their dignity during disasters or crises. People's immediate needs are met, communities are enabled to become resilient to shocks and governments are actively involved in contributing to safer and more peaceful communities.

Social Empowerment and Protection

Social Empowerment and Protection seeks to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised have access to basic services, like health and education, and are empowered in their social development. This is realised by organising and mobilising communities to solve their own problems and work on opportunities through asset-based community development processes.

Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Inclusive Entrepreneurship enables disadvantaged people and groups to acquire the attitudes, competences and skills they need to earn an income and build their dreams. This is realised by creating social and economic value through entrepreneurial livelihoods and applying it to self-employment, small businesses, member-based entities or social enterprises.

Dorcas in Romania



Dorcas Romania works in East, Central and West Romania. We focus on areas where there is large-scale poverty and/or specific groups of marginalised and vulnerable people, such as children, Roma families and older people. Dorcas is active in socioeconomic development with a successful intervention history in three areas: Community Safety Nets Development, Roma Inclusion and Rural Economic Empowerment and Inclusion. In these areas, we act as a facilitator, connector, funder, trainer and advocate, and we contribute to existing partnerships and networks.

We develop sustainable programmes that focus on approaches such as Community Safety Nets, Future4Children, Asset-based Community Development, Local Resource Mobilisation, and Community-Based Protection. Our programming also clearly emphasises Social Empowerment and Protection and Inclusive Entrepreneurship.

Our projects for Roma adults and children enable them to accomplish life objectives, such as completing their schooling or obtaining employment. Inclusive Entrepreneurship helps Roma women to contribute to the growth of a social enterprise in their community, which serves as a stepping stone for them in their personal and professional lives.

Through the Community Safety Nets, older people can engage in Income-Generating Activities such as handcrafting, cooking and agricultural work. This keeps them active and provides them with an income.

In our Next Steps project, we combat human trafficking by striving for social empowerment and the protection of (potential) victims.

Since February 2022, we have provided humanitarian assistance, emotional and psychosocial care for Ukrainian refugees. We also ease their transition to finding work in Romania by improving their language skills and connecting them with employment opportunities.





Roma Inclusion and Development Project

For over 20 years, Dorcas Romania has worked toward the inclusion and development of the Roma communities. In 2014, we started working with local partners to implement programmes in the village of Tărian (West Romania). By strengthening the local multistakeholder partnership formed by the municipal council, school and NGOs, we managed to mobilise resources to enhance ownership of the programme.

The after-school programme currently serves more than 80 children every day. It contributes to their development by making learning an easier activity. In addition to the educational component, the children participate in extracurricular activities that help them become better members of their community. For example, we host life skills classes, plan day trips and organise the children’s favourite activity, the summer camp. Parents have an important role in child education and so we involve them in our activities too: we offer support through counselling, job mediation and life skills trainings, and we encourage them to actively participate in community events.

Sukhar Community Centre

At Sukhar Community Centre disadvantaged Roma women can build relationships of trust while they work on improving their social and professional skills in a safe environment. We funded and support the centre together with local partners. At Sukhar, we organise weekly sewing classes where the women can learn new skills they can use at home and also to find a job. We have also opened a web store, www.sukhar.ro, where we sell items created together with the Roma women.



Community Safety Nets for vulnerable older people

Since 2003, Dorcas Romania has made life easier for vulnerable Romanian older people. Through our local partners, we provide material, emotional and spiritual support to approximately 950 people from six different counties. The project staff visit the older people every month to encourage them and build relationships of trust. Social clubs, where members can spend time together and pray while they cook or make handcrafted goods, are among the most sought-after activities. We also organise day trips to visit monasteries or beautiful nature spots and community events where older people can let their voice be heard.

Furthermore, we have empowered our partners to create local community safety nets and mobilised local authorities, churches and other NGOs to support vulnerable older people.

Local Resource Mobilisation training empowers local stakeholders

As part of our commitment to strengthen and empower local communities, Dorcas Romania works to mobilise community resources and enhance community safety nets. These efforts have an immediate and sustainable effect on improving the living circumstances of those most in need.

We do this through our Local Resource Mobilisation training programme. This is aimed at leaders and project managers from organisations, local governments and churches and it enables them to advance their work within communities by mobilising community resources. The training is based on our experience and knowledge in the sector that we have accumulated over 30 years of working in Romania.



Blue Bucket Campaign

The Blue Bucket Campaign is organised by Dorcas Country Offices in Albania, Moldova and Ukraine in cooperation with local partner organisations. Its main goal is to mobilise local communities to collect food to support vulnerable people, such as older persons and low-income families. The campaign also strengthens and further develops local Community Safety Nets.

Since it started in 2009, Romania's campaign has filled over 30,000 blue buckets with food and reached people in fifteen counties. What makes this initiative unique is the number of people, organisations, schools and volunteers who enthusiastically participate each year. During the campaign, blue buckets line the hallways of schools and you can regularly see people shopping at the supermarket with a blue bucket in hand. The blue buckets we deliver at the end of a campaign are a welcome gift and source of encouragement for people who struggle to survive.



Impact Story

Ioana is a shining example in her Roma community

Ioana is one of the women from the Roma community in the village of Tărian. At 18 months, she suffered a very serious burn to her left hand, leaving her in a coma for three months.

Due to her disability, her parents did not send her to school because they feared that other children would make fun of her, so Ioana did not learn to read and write. Fortunately, that changed when a school for adults was organised as part of the social projects in Girişu de Criş implemented together with Dorcas Romania. That gave Ioana and others in the community the chance to get a basic education. Ioana now has three children and she made sure they went to school. Her family is really proud that her son now attends a vocational college in Oradea.

The Sukhar Community Centre is where Ioana's talent really comes to the fore. She attended the sewing lessons as soon as these started even though she could scarcely use her left hand. Ioana was determined to learn and she became one of the best students at the centre. 'I love sewing and when I

come to the centre I relax and forget about all of my problems', Ioana says. During the latest project, the women made clothes and sandals for a Romanian Aelia doll. Ioana was the only woman in the class who could cut the leather to make the doll's shoes because it was painstaking work that required incredible dexterity.

'I love sewing and when I come to the centre I relax and forget about all of my problems'

'I am grateful that God has blessed my life, despite my disability. My family has grown over the years, and we now live in a beautiful house in the Roma community with a small garden and space to keep animals', says Iona proudly.

Sustainable Development Goals: Leave no one behind

Our programmes in Romania are directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, most notably:



Dorcas in Eastern Europe

Dorcas is active in Albania and the former “Soviet Block” countries of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. Besides the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, the region is confronted by the longstanding issues of widespread corruption, high rural poverty, the rural-urban divide in welfare, a lack of care for older people, and marginalisation of certain social groups – especially Roma and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, these problems persist due to weak governance and justice systems, poor social cohesion, failing employment policies, and various human rights issues. However, on a positive note, a gradual strengthening of organised civil society is taking place.



Our work

In Eastern Europe, Dorcas focuses on the programme concepts Social Empowerment & Protection and Inclusive Entrepreneurship. We implement these through a bottom-up approach informed by research, data and the Country Offices’ experience. Our programmes are mainly realised in local systems by building resilient communities with community safety nets and advocating for a just system. Dorcas is committed to developing a strong regional profile in Eastern Europe based on cross-border programming, learning and exchange, and the joint development of resources and partnerships.

Partners in Romania

Our Programme Partners:

- ASA Association, Tărian
- Betania Christian Center, Oradea
- Diakonia Christian Foundation, Cluj-Napoca
- “Fileo” Community Development Association, Botoşani
- Lord’s Army Association, Gherla
- Pro Christo et Ecclesia Association (CE) - Targu Mureş, Zalău, Oradea
- “Pentru Tine” Christian Association, Botoşani
- “Taina Milei” Community Development Association, Vaslui

Our Strategic Partners and Donors:

- FOND
- Roma Workers Network
- ADV – Social Economy Network
- PROTECT
- CPOE
- RENASIS

Partner with us!

I am Attila Daray, Country Director of Dorcas Romania. I enjoy working with both (inter)national and local partners. Are you interested in a possible collaboration or wondering what contribution your organisation could make? Then please get in touch with me. I look forward to exploring the opportunities for a partnership with you.

Do you have any other questions about Dorcas’ work in Romania or would you like more information about a specific topic? Then please visit www.dorcas.org/romania or contact us.

Partner with us! Together we can realise lasting changes in the lives of people in need.



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We fight poverty, exclusion
and crisis. We empower
marginalised people and
communities to flourish.
This is how we follow
Jesus Christ.