

Economic and Financial Crisis – Challenge for Adaptation of the Official Development System of the Slovak Republic¹

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Abstract

Official Development Assistance (ODA) system is not being considered as a traditional instrument for economic cooperation promotion between the donor and the recipient country. The ongoing economic and financial crisis has severely affected the competitive pressure in the international and national markets. The aim of each economic entity is to adapt and to ensure the competitive advantage in a turbulent economic environment. The main objective is to examine the economic cooperation development of Slovakia through official development projects in Kenya. The author analyses the ODA system of Slovak Republic during the economic and financial crisis and presents the possibility of economic cooperation development between Slovak Republic and the ODA recipient countries (namely Kenya).

Key words

Economic and financial crisis, adaptation, sustainability, Official Development Assistance (ODA) system of the Slovak Republic, Kenya – priority country of Slovak ODA

JEL Classification: O10, O11, O19

Introduction

The current economic and financial crisis, which occurred in 2007/2008 in the USA spread gradually through the entire world and has transformed into a global economic crisis. The national and international markets have been hit by a significant increase in competitive pressure. Key economic players started to search for alternative policies in order to survive and to overcome the current economic crisis.

Slovakia was hit by the global economic crisis, as it is a small, open and pro-export oriented economy and is fully influenced by the fluctuations at the foreign markets. Slovak domestic market has a small capacity, therefore the foreign demand plays a key role in economic growth. The biggest Slovak trade partners fell into recession. Growing lack of trust in the performance of the economies have resulted in a decline in demand and consumption, which affected Slovak economy as well. Slovak government bodies started to look for alternative approaches to overcome the effects of economic crisis. Despite the fact, that the Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not being considered as a traditional export promotion instrument, ODA can be used as a specific instrument which on one hand helps poor countries to develop and on the other hand

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creates the opportunities for developing economic cooperation and export promotion of the donor country.

1 Methodology

The paper analyses the presence of the Slovak Republic in Kenya, focusing on possible economic cooperation and gives recommendations to further develop economic partnership through ongoing official development assistance. Two scientific methods are being used in the paper: the descriptive research and deduction. The descriptive research is being used for describing the existing variables, categorizing the existing information. The descriptive research is being used to obtain information concerning the current status of the Official Development Assistance of Slovak Republic in general and particularly in Kenya. The deduction method is being used in the second part of the paper aiming at investigation the potential of the official development assistance transfer into the economic cooperation opportunities.

2 Official Development Assistance of Slovak Republic

The official development assistance of the Slovak Republic for 2013 amounts to approximately EUR 60.9 million, including contributions of the Slovak Republic to the budget of the EU and international organisations. In 2013, the Slovak Republic will try to maintain the ODA share of its Gross National Income (GNI) at 0.091%, the level achieved in 2011, which, however, will make the country again lag behind in fulfilling the international commitments adopted by the EU (to achieve ODA/GNI share of 0.17% by 2010 and ODA/GNI of 0.33% by 2015).³ The table below illustrates ODA in million Euros and as a percentage of GNI since 2007.

Table 1 Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic 2007 - 2013

Year	Mil. EUR	% ODA/GNI
2007	54,8	0,093
2008	65,4	0,102
2009	54,0	0,086
2010	55,6	0,085
2011	61,9	0,091
2012	60,9	0,087
2013*	60,9	0,091

* Assumption

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. (2013). *National Programme of Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic for 2013*. Bratislava.

³ According to the ODA data for 2011, no new EU Member State, except from Malta, currently fulfils the mentioned international development commitments. Source: Council of the EU Document No. 049/12 DEVGEN of 10.04.2012

2.1 Priority countries of the Slovak Republic

Three priority countries have been identified as ODA recipient countries, namely Afghanistan, Kenya and South Sudan. Technical assistance is being delivered to Western Balkan countries (primarily Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia), countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership (primarily Ukraine, Moldavia, Belarus and Georgia) and countries of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood (with a focus on Tunisia). The sector priorities of the Slovak ODA are based on the Medium-term Strategy of ODA SR for 2009–2013 (building democratic institutions and market environment, building infrastructure, social, environment protection, agriculture, food safety, and use of raw materials).

Development cooperation with priority countries is a key component of Slovak ODA. It is based on a comprehensive and strategic approach to project implementation, and will enable a gradual shift from project to programme cooperation, as was recommended to the Slovak Republic in the evaluation report of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (DAC).⁴

Afghanistan

Development cooperation with Afghanistan is based on political and economic commitments, on the long-term involvement of Slovak entities as well as on the international position of the Slovak Republic. The cooperation is based on the Afghan National Development Strategy, as well as on the outcomes of the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan from July 2012. The realisation of development cooperation requires improved security situation in the country and fulfilment of the Afghan government's commitments concerning transparency, respecting human rights, principles of democracy and the rule of law. The Slovak ODA in 2013 will focus mainly on improving healthcare, quality of education on all levels, supporting socio-economic development and building capacities in the area of security sector reform. According to the National Programme of ODA SR 2013, the bilateral ODA for Afghanistan will amount to 600,000 EUR.

South Sudan

South Sudan was included among priority countries of the Slovak ODA in 2011, based on the appeal of the international community, as well as previous successful work of Slovak entities performing development activities in South Sudan since 2005. The Slovak activities are highly appreciated by the local community, and contribute to the good reputation of the Slovak Republic in the international field. Slovak Republic actively participates in joint EU programming for South Sudan in the healthcare sector. Development cooperation of the Slovak Republic with South Sudan in 2013 will focus mainly on improving healthcare standards, increasing the quality of education on all levels and supporting socio-economic development. According to the National Programme of ODA SR 2013, the bilateral ODA for South Sudan will amount to 800,000 EUR.

⁴ According to the DAC Special Peer Review (p. 32), Slovakia should reform its mechanism of providing ODA, and move from individual small projects to programme modalities, harmonized with strategic documents.

Kenya

Kenya has been territorial priority of the Slovak ODA since 2003. Consequently it is possible to build on a strong tradition of mutual relationships and ongoing activities of Slovak entities. Non-governmental organisations are well established in the country, as well as Slovak research and education institutions, specifically in the field of health-care and education. Links between Slovak Republic and Kenya have a great potential for involving Slovak entities in development activities, as well as for supporting business activities that have a positive impact on the socio-economic situation in the country. The Slovak Development Cooperation Forum in Nairobi in November 2012 established a base for developing a framework programme of the Slovak ODA in Kenya, enabling a more strategic and comprehensive approach to cooperation with this country. The development cooperation between SR and Kenya in 2013 will focus mainly on improving healthcare standards, increasing the quality of all education levels, supporting socio-economic development, including support of agricultural production, environment protection and the use of economically significant raw materials. According to the National Programme of ODA SR 2013, the bilateral ODA for Kenya will amount to 1,2 mil. EUR.

3 Moving forward – From Development Assistance to economic cooperation

Development assistance goes hand in hand with economic cooperation (Obadi, 2012). One of the main goals of Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in Slovak Republic in 2013 in the area of ODA is to intensify the involvement of the business sector in the Slovak development cooperation. The starting point is the Concept of Involving Business Entities in Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic,⁵ which defines new approaches, forms and steps of selecting projects and measures, in order to increase the involvement of the business community.

In terms of new forms, a grant scheme was opened in 2013 for starting business partnerships in the developing countries (the so-called Start Ups) that will support the identification and search for partnership entities in the developing countries, developing case studies, business plans, market and marketing analyses, training of the local workforce, etc. A new form of project co-financing will also be pilot-tested, submitted by Slovak companies based on specific tasks. Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and embassies will prepare project outlines based on consultations with the government of the developing country, and will look for a Slovak supplier through a call for tender. The most effective offer will be chosen. Development activities will be supported by Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic. The amount of 650,000 EUR has been allocated in the National Programme ODA 2013 for starting partnerships in developing countries (the so-called Start Ups).

⁵ *Concept of Involving Business Entities in Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic*. Retrieved from [http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_435778A032E49F41C1257AD400500835_SK/\\$File/Koncepcia%20ODA%20a%20podnikatelia.pdf](http://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_435778A032E49F41C1257AD400500835_SK/$File/Koncepcia%20ODA%20a%20podnikatelia.pdf)

3.1 Building economic partnership with Kenya through ODA

Kenya is not only a getaway to African market, but also plays a pivotal role in the peace process in Somalia (fight against piracy) and Sudan. Recently Kenya has adopted the new Constitution of Kenya (in August 2010), which builds a milestone for the democratic development of the country. Kenya is also an important economic and political partner of European Union (Spath, 2012).

Since 2003 Kenya has been one of the priority countries of Slovak Official Development Assistance (besides Afghanistan and South Sudan). Slovak non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have been present in Kenya for almost 17 years (since 1996), through ODA for 10 years (since 2003). Currently, 14 development projects and 14 development activities supported through small financial grants financed by Slovak Aid are being carried out in Kenya, with the total value of 3,2 mil. EUR. Slovak development projects in Kenya mainly focus on healthcare, education, agriculture, rural development and environment. Table below shows list of ODA projects in Kenya for period 2010 – 2012.

Table 2 List of ODA projects in Kenya 2010 - 2012

Year	Project name	Company /Investor	Sector	ODA Financing
2010	Capacity building in agriculture in central Kenya	People in Peril	Agriculture	205 912,00
	Maggot therapy for healing of open and chronic wounds in Kenya	Scientica, Ltd.	Healthcare	231 689,52
				437 601,52
2011	Community centre "Rusinga Island" at the Victory lake in Kenya	Humanist Centre NAROVINU	Social development, Healthcare	170 880,00
	Ecosystem protection and reduction of degradation of Mau forest by local community integration	People in Peril	Environment protection	296 959,13
	Providing access to university education in Kenya	St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work	Social development, healthcare	253 308,00
	Digital technologies and project learning at schools in Voi	Pontis Foundation	Social development, education	151 594,00
	Social – healthcare for malnutrition children under 5 years in Kwale region	Trnava University in Trnava, Faculty of Health Care and Social Work	Social development, healthcare	288 575,92

	Improving food security and health of communities in the Kericho district	Caritas Slovakia	Agriculture and Environment Protection	263 232,00
				1 424 549,05
2012	Providing access to elementary school from socially disadvantaged communities in Kenya	St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work	Education	286 781,32
	Labour skills for poor teenagers in Nairobi	SAVIO	Education	217 574,00
	Increase of economic and food security through agricultural development and natural resources protection in east Kenya	People in Peril	Agriculture and environment protection	268 060,00
	Access to drinking water for rural inhabitants in Kajiado, Rift Valley	AQUA-GEO, Ltd.	Agriculture and environment protection	149 392,50
	Craft education for socially disadvantaged communities in Kenya	Two-colour world	Education	192 211,00
				1 114 018,82
	TOTAL			2 976 169,39

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

Slovak Development Cooperation Forum in Nairobi

The ongoing cooperation with Kenya through development projects opens a discussion to move forward and to use previous experience of Slovak business companies to further develop economic partnership with Kenya (SlovakAid, 2011).

In November 2012 the Slovak Development Cooperation Forum in Nairobi opened up a discussion for the future cooperation between Kenya and Slovakia. It was the first event organized by Slovak Republic in the priority country of Slovak ODA (recipient of Slovak Aid). The main aim was to evaluate the presence of Slovak business companies in Kenya since 1996, define strategies and policies for the upcoming years in order to make Slovak ODA system even more effective and sustainable from long-term perspective. The main message was to build and intensify the synergies between ODA and economic cooperation. An important step towards more strategic and conceptual approach towards future development and economic cooperation is the preparation of the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) on Kenya. The CSP should plan the economic cooperation possibilities and project realizations in Kenya for the upcoming years. The main sector priorities have been identified: healthcare, education and socio – economic development. Kenya proposed to compensate trade balance between Slovakia and

Kenya. Kenya offered its main export commodities to the Slovak partners: tea, coffee, flowers and tropical fruit. Kenya is willing to cooperate in following sectors: tourism, research and development, information technologies. The forum participants admitted the need to interlink ODA projects with micro grants, programme CETIR⁶ and volunteer programmes.

Economic situation in Kenya

In 2012, economic growth in Kenya slightly slowed down but remained at the solid rate of 5 %. Due to external shocks, the impact of the drought and strong domestic demand, inflation rose sharply in the second half of 2011 but has declined subsequently and is expected to reach one digit level in 2013.

Table 3 Main macroeconomic indicators in Kenya 2010 - 2012

Macroeconomic Indicator	2010	2011	2012
Gross domestic product (% change)	5.552	5.000	5.200
Gross domestic product per capita (\$)	808.077	850.555	1,008.199
Inflation, average consumer prices (% change)	4.086	13.998	10.626
Population (millions)	39.742	40.910	42.104
General government revenue (%GDP)	24.598	25.569	25.887
General government gross debt (%GDP)	49.809	48.944	46.554
Current account balance (%GDP)	-6.525	-11.811	-9.568

Source: IMF statistics database.

Through ODA projects Slovak companies have been involved in business in Kenya. This creates the opportunity to further develop economic and trade cooperation between Kenya and Slovak republic. A solid cooperation is possible in many sectors, such as building of infrastructure (roads + networks), energy (nuclear + renewable energy), machinery, water and waste management, agriculture, tourism, defence and security technology. A strong legal basis builds the three existing agreements between Kenya and Slovakia, which were signed in Nairobi in December 2011: the agreement on mutual support and protection of investments, the agreement on development cooperation and the agreement on cultural cooperation. A long-term implementation of these mutual agreements shall contribute to the intensifying of bilateral cooperation.

Official Development Assistance opens up a possibility for Slovak companies to participate in business in Kenya through ODA project realization. The table below shows the current trade balance between Slovak republic and Kenya.

⁶ CETIR – Centre for Transfer of Experience from Integration and Reforms.

Table 4 Trade balance between Slovak Republic and Kenya in thousand EUR

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Export	2 818	2 139	3 065	4 123	2 937	4 047	4 245
Import	458	479	401	696	372	454	646
Turnover	3 276	2 618	3 466	4 819	3 309	4 501	4 891
Trade balance	+2 360	+1 660	+2 664	+3 427	+2 565	+3 593	+3 599

Source: Calculated by the author using Trade statistics of Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic.

Merchandise structure of exports and imports of the Slovak Republic

The Slovak export to Kenya increased in 2012 by 10,5%. The main export commodities are paper and cardboard (30%), automobiles (18,2%) and electric machines and devices. The export of nuclear reactors, optic, medical and metering devices rose three times in comparison with previous year. The main import commodities from Kenya are flowers, tea, coffee, fruit and vegetables.

Potential economic cooperation between SR and Kenya

As mentioned above Slovak subjects have been present in Kenya for 17 years. An existing rich tradition can be further developed. Many NGO's, Slovak academic and education institutions are well established in Kenya, mainly in healthcare and education sector.

A great potential also exists for integrating of Slovak business sector in Kenya. There are some niches in merchandise exchange, Slovak Republic can possibly act in following fields: road and railway infrastructure, defence industry, water industry, plastic waste recycling, nuclear and geothermal energy and software system development.

Slovak business companies have already been working on many projects mainly in sectors such as road construction, plastic waste processing, water pumps and software systems. The ongoing projects are being listed in the table below.

Table 5 Projects between Kenya and Slovakia

Company	Project description
Castor & Pollux and Doprastav (Slovak – Kenyan consortium)	Infrastructure building, 50 km road infrastructure in Isebania (Tanzanian border)
Castor & Pollux	Factory building for waste management of plastics in Kisumu
Gratex International	Software system for Kenya (ID cards, population registration), software system for tax authorities in Kenya
Aqua Solutions	Drinking water supply for army and task forces
Fleming International	Organising of conferences in financial, pharmaceutical and energy sector
Hydrotour (in cooperation with ESSO – Czech tourist agency)	Direct charter flights between Bratislava and Mombasa, tourist agency

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

Besides the projects listed in the table above, Kenya is going to build its first nuclear power station. The representatives of the Nuclear Electricity Project Committee have already visited Slovakia twice. Slovakia is interested in applying its expert and production capacity in the construction of the first nuclear power station in Kenya.

Another possible cooperation is through the programme CETIR (Centre for Transfer of Experience from Integration and Reforms). Slovakia is willing to share its experience from recent transformation, reform and integration processes, as well as from building democratic institutions and law system reform (police reform, local and regional administration, democratic elections, financial institutions, anti-corruption, registration of population, issuing of ID cards, etc.).

Another challenge for Slovak republic is the project of use of geothermal energy in Kenya. Slovak Republic can offer its expertise in complete construction of photocell, water power stations, technology supply for security and comfort increase of railway infrastructure. Slovakia can share its expertise in waste management, plastic waste processing and its use in energy sector, complex reconstruction of existing airports.

Tourism could be another possible field of cooperation. Despite terrorist attacks, ethnical conflicts in some parts of Kenya, there is a low interest of Slovak clients travelling to Kenya. The Slovak tourist agency Hydrotour (in cooperation with ESSO – Czech tourist agency) introduced direct charter flight between Bratislava and Mombasa.

Conclusion

The ongoing economic and financial crisis brought significant changes in business environment. Adaptability became the most important challenge for all economic players. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Adaptability is not imitation. It means power of resistance and assimilation." This is especially true for adverse or ambiguous circumstances. In tough economic times and crisis, adaptable business leaders develop the ability to overcome adverse conditions and find breakthrough solutions to problems.

However, Slovak republic is a small donor in international donor community; Slovakia can use its ODA system for efficient export promotion and economic cooperation development. Kenya example presented in this paper should serve as a master for building strong economic cooperation with all other recipient countries of Slovak Official Development Assistance in the future. Hence, ODA system cannot replace the export, the example demonstrated in this paper shows, that ODA can be used as an effective tool for export promotion in order to overcome the negative effects of the ongoing economic and financial crisis.

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