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Bridging gaps:

Interpeace and the reduction of violence in El Salvador

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Interpeace is a Peacebuilding organization that after twenty years of experience in different countries in the world focuses on strengthening local empowerment for processes of social change and promoting trust among actors polarized by conflict in order to achieve long-term commitments. Interpeace considers that this can be achieved by the involvement of all relevant social groups (government, political elites, civil society, and the population at large) in order to transform conflict. Instead of a final destination in time, Interpeace perceives peace as a continuous process of changing attitudes towards social conflict that allows for a strengthening of capacities by actors to manage conflict in non-violent forms through dialogue, participation, and a search for consensus.

In contrast to traditional outlooks held by the international community where society is divided into "tracks" that experience intervention singly (Track 1, political elites; Track 2, civil society; and Track 3, communities and grassroots), Interpeace proposes that the systemic nature of society requires interventions aimed at generating synergies and supporting interac-tions among different tracks. Interpeace's focus can be defined as the search, via participatory processes of dialogue, for bridges among the State, organized civil society, and the community at large. Interpeace understands that it is necessary to assist political elites and the government in understanding the needs and demands of communities and that these, in turn, acquire a better understanding and commitment towards political elites and governments, but it is fundamental for Peacebuilding to strengthen the links and commitments of those social groups in the middle of both social extremes.

The approach proposed by Interpeace, called Track 6, thus consists of the integration of the three social tracks in order to strengthen the interactions among them. This integration will depend in large measure on processes of social change that take into account social cohesion, the empowerment of key actors in the process, and the legitimacy of political and social institutions as fundamental elements for social interaction among the different tracks.

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strategic horizon which contains opportunities for generating positive political conditions for dialogue and the search for consensus. This means support for confidence-building measures, since it is these that will allow for polarized actors to find legitimate mechanisms to avoid the use of violence in conflict situations.

This article seeks to reflect on the contribution by Interpeace to the process of violence reduction in El Salvador from the perspective of one of the fundamental elements of the focus on Peacebuilding that characterizes our organization: Track 6. Under this operational outlook, Interpeace implements a

number of strategies aimed at consolidating peace in El Salvador, which is understood as a social process, constant and sustainable, that strengthens the capacities of national actors to transform conflict in non-violent forms.

Violence reduction for peacebuilding in El Salvador

Interpeace's outlook as previously described singled out violence reduction as a determining factor for Peacebuilding in El Salvador. Decades of violence have undermined the limited positive outcomes brought on by the peace accords signed in 1992. This violence, especially ascribed to youth gangs, has multiple causes and a variety of actors have influenced its reproduction, directly or indirectly.

The main outcomes of this violence have been the loss of thousands of lives, the polarization of society, an increase in fear, the radicalization of groups of young people as well as the security forces, and the rupture of important social ties both within social groups directly affected by violence and between these groups and the rest of society, especially the State.

In order to understand the magnitude of violence in the country, the damage it inflicts on social relations and, thus, the importance of lowering its incidence to allow for Peacebuilding, we must recall the nature of violence and its context in El Salvador. The following section seeks to describe the nature of the gang phenomenon and the influence exercised over it, directly or indirectly, by a variety of social actors.

The cycles of violence in El Salvador

Violence exercised by gangs in El Salvador is the result of a long process of conflict reproduction which has not been resolved or which has been addressed fundamentally through repression by forceful means. Up until 2012, homicidal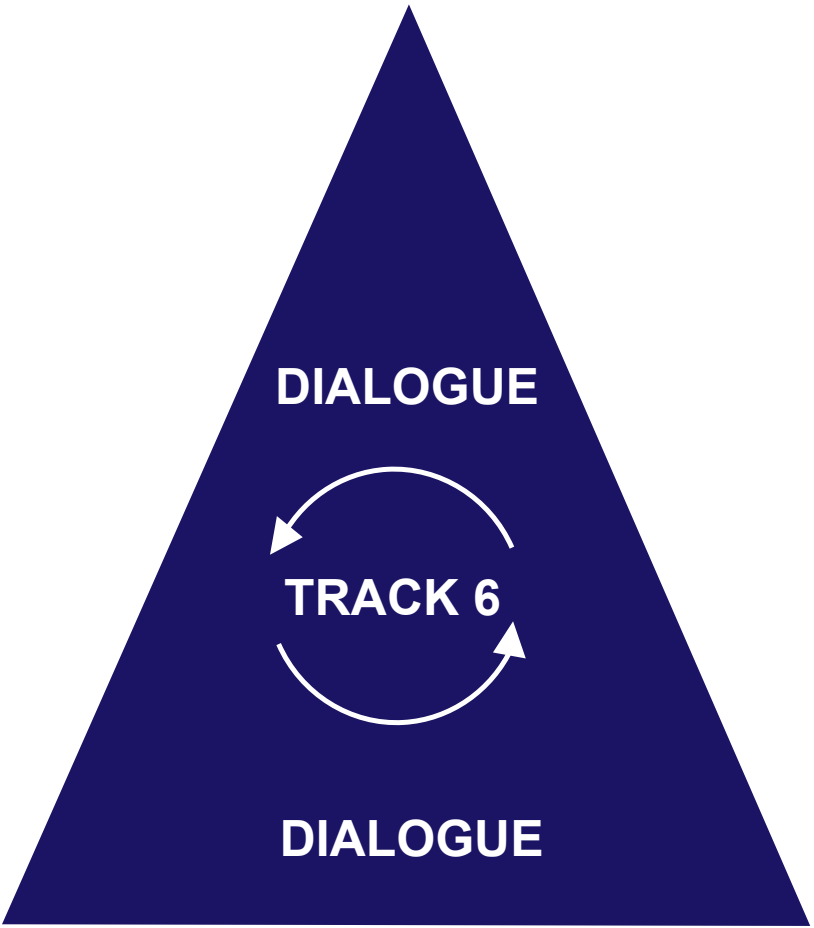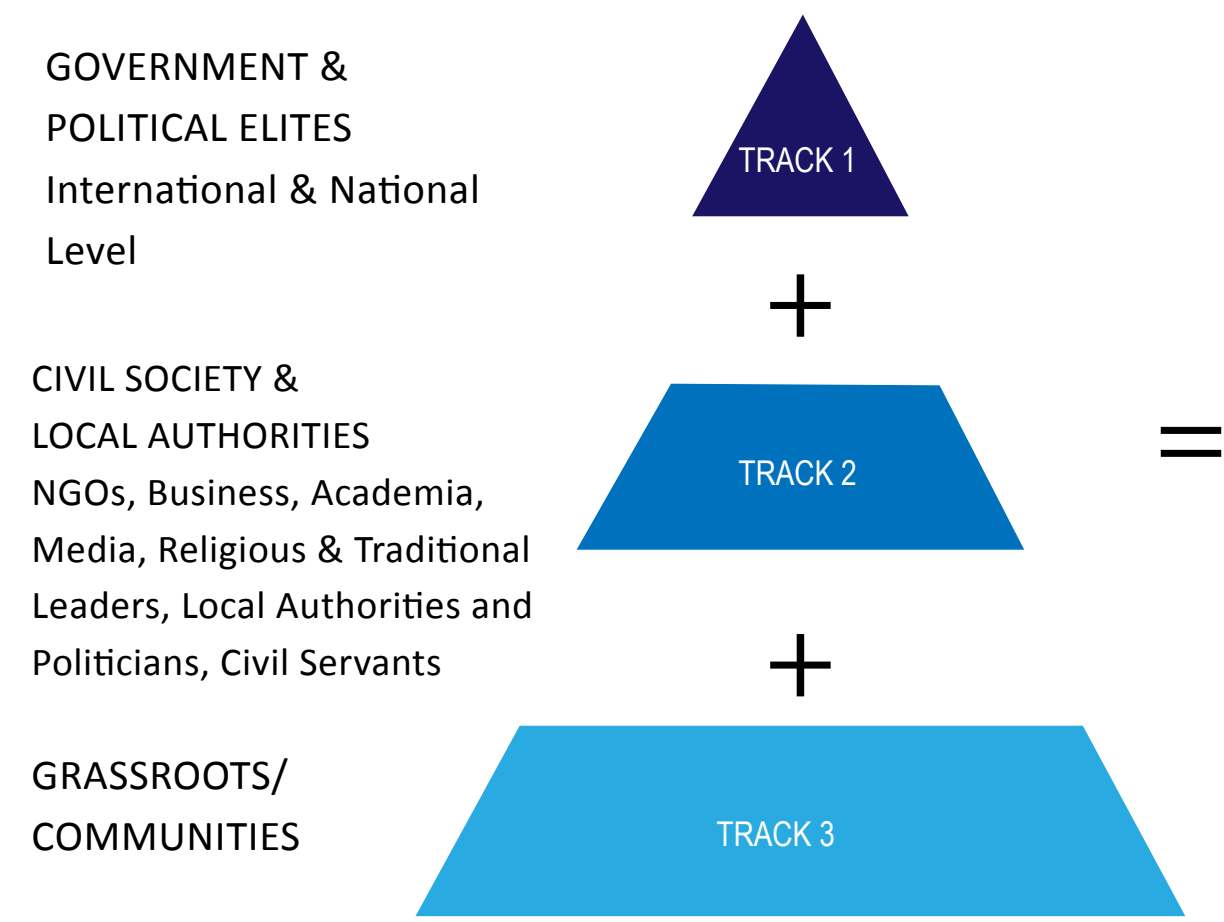 violence in El Salvador reached levels that placed it among the most violent countries in the world: in 2011, official sources reported 70.1 homicides for every one hundred thousand inhabitants.

This situation is only the tip of the iceberg. The problem of violence in the country is expressed at a number of levels that must be explained in order for Peacebuilding to proceed.

The most visible expression of the problem of violence in El Salvador is the confrontation between various gangs (or maras in the local slang, such as "Mara Salvatrucha", "Barrio 18", "La Máquina", and "Mirada Locos"). This confrontation, as analyzed in a number of studies, has been propelled by a war for control of territories and the construction of identities built upon the differences with other groups. What began in the 1980s as street fights with sticks and stones ended up in an open and declared war in the majority of urban centres in the country.

In order to acquire a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, we must identify the causes for the radicalization of violence among these groups. Among the main factors associated with the extremes of violence reached by gang violence we can mention the easy access to firearms, an increase in the cycles of revenge and hatred, a higher profit margin for illicit activities, and a predominance of repressive policies instead of those involving the prevention of violence. Simultaneously, the organizational and operational structures of the gangs were transformed due to massive imprisonments of gang leaders and their members and increased police repression as well as the impact on the gangs as a result

GOVERNMENT &
POLITICAL ELITES
International & National
Level

TRACK 1

+

CIVIL SOCIETY &
LOCAL AUTHORITIES
NGOs, Business, Academia,
Media, Religious & Traditional
Leaders, Local Authorities and
Politicians, Civil Servants

TRACK 2

=

+

GRASSROOTS/
COMMUNITIES

TRACK 3

DIALOGUE

TRACK 6

DIALOGUE

«Up until 2012, homicidal violence in El Salvador reached levels that placed it among the most violent countries in the world: in 2011, official sources reported 70.1 homicides for every one hundred thousand inhabitants»

of massive deportations of gang members from the United States.

All of this happened in a social context that during the first decade of this century was still inimical to long-term peace, including circumstances inherited from the civil war as well as a long history of social exclusion and inequality and the limited political reforms in the post-war years.

In El Salvador, violence has been a constant that at a number of moments in its history has reached extreme levels. Whether it originates in the State in order to repress

a social revolt, as was the case of the massacre of peasants in 1932, or undertaken by security forces or insurgent groups, as occurred during the civil war, we can deduce that violence has become imbedded in the aggregate of social relations. Society after the peace accords lacked the necessary mechanisms to transform the patterns of violence inherited from decades past and the subsequent increase in violence among gangs.

In the midst of the crossfire between gangs and between these and the security forces, Salvadoran society sought protection through a number of means. In the case of those communities where gang members live, the solution was seclusion and locked-up homes as well as the exclusion of gang members. For those social sectors that live beyond the confines of gang violence, the solution was private security, the use of firearms, and the closing of public spaces.

In addition, various governments concentrated their actions on only fighting the criminal dimension of the gang phenomenon and disregarding other social and economic aspects associated with the problem. The anti-gang policies,

known as the "hard fist" (mano dura), increased the stigmatization and criminalization of young people who ended up being identified as gang members if they happened to share social origins and places of residence. Along similar lines, the use of the Army was increased in public security activities and judicial procedures were modified to make it easier to criminally prosecute people associated with gangs. In this context, electoral campaigning focused on public safety issues, duly amplified by the media.

Other social actors, such as the private business sector, demanded that the government implement radical measures to counter the impact of extorsions that the gangs were imposing on businesses, companies, and industries. The negative impact that violence exerts on the climate for investment, both national and international, was emphasized. Organized civil society, outside of some brave attempts to intervene in the problem, was losing ground for action due to the radicalization of gangs and the legal restrictions that impeded any type of contact with gang members, real or presumed.

At the international level a variety of positions were expressed regarding the phenomenon. On the one hand, the gangs – the Mara Salvatrucha in particular – were considered part of transnational criminal organizations, which justified providing international support for specialized police units to combat gangs in the country. On the other, interventions by international cooperation agencies sought to influence different social strata (political elites and decision-makers, civil society, grassroots communities) but in piecemeal fashion, without considering the complex and precarious interplay among them. As a result, technical assistance was provided, on the one hand, to government officials for devising policies and programmes for prevention of violence. On the other, support was provided to civil society organizations through programmes of primary and secondary prevention, in other words, to address risk factors associated with violence but without involving active gang members. It was hoped that the impact of both levels of intervention would spill over to the rest of society that did not participate, as well non-participating organizations of civil

society and the political and technical decision-making elite.

The situation in 2011 was that of a polarized society, in which social interactions among the State, civil society, and the population at large were characterized by the use of violence, polarizing rhetoric, and expectations for solutions via extreme measures. The gangs went from a form of youthful association to become well-structured and disciplined social organizations, prepared to exercise violence and generate income through illicit operations as well as to provide social protection for their members in the face of attacks from rival gangs and the security forces and exclusion from the work force and any basic public service.

An opportunity for peace

An opportunity to break the cycles described above was essential to initiate processes of social change that might re-establish positive interactions for Peacebuilding.

In March 2012, in the midst of a confused and polarized context, a pact between gangs known as "the truce" (la tregua) was made

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known publicly. This event led to two immediate effects: on the one hand, a deep-seated rejection by a variety of social and political sectors due to mistrust and a lack of transparency regarding the role of the State in negotiating the truce; and on the other, a decline of about sixty percent in the homicide rate in the country.

During 2012, the position of the various social groups regarding the truce assumed various forms. On the one side were the opponents representing mostly political parties, the private sector, the media, and some civil society organizations and academic institutions

Interpeace and the Organization of American States (OAS) signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to promote peace and security in Central America
Photo credit: OEA

Salvador Ruano, mayor of Ilopango, onoe of the 11 violence-free municipalities
Photo credit: Interpeace

Meeting with members of La Selva community, Santa Tecla
Photo credit: Interpeace

Interpeace's focus can be defined as the search, via participatory processes of dialogue, for bridges among the State, organized civil society, and the community at large

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as well as some international organisms; on the other side, the gangs and their mediators were engaged in keeping down the homicides and extending the pacts while at the same time strengthening their position in the public's eye in the face of their numerous detractors.

The political confrontation generated by the truce among gangs was the result both of its exceptional and controversial nature as well as the persistent lack of legitimacy, trust, and social cohesion in the country. Even though there had been previous attempts by the gangs to present their demands to the political elite, the appropriate conditions for these to translate into tangible results had not existed. The truce brought home to the public the deep social roots of the problem of the gangs in the country.

The truce not only evidenced the failure of repression as the only means to confront the problem. It also shed light on the limited results of the numerous prevention projects implemented in El Salvador that were conceived as an alternative to the logic of the strong-fisted approach and, thus,

would lower the homicide rate; that these prevention projects did not measure up to expectations was due, among other reasons, to the absence, in both their conception as well as their implementation, of those actors who find themselves in the very centre of the cycles of violence.

The truce, as a conjunctural action in the midst of confronted political actors, could not be the solution to a problem whose roots are intertwined with larger structural problems of Salvadoran society. However, from a perspective of Peacebuilding, the truce constituted an opportunity to initiate the long and complex path to social change.

Interpeace and its contribution to violence reduction in El Salvador

The reduction in homicides that resulted from the 2012 truce meant an opportunity to initiate a wider process of violence reduction in the country. It was also an opportunity to make public, in the voice of their own protagonists, the social roots of the gang phenomenon and their willingness to

become a part of the solution to the problem.

From the perspective of Interpeace's Peacebuilding, the inclusion of the gangs as part of the solution to the problem of violence and, consequently, their participation in dialogues, does not mean a rejection of the strengthening of the rule of law. On the contrary, a fundamental factor in Peacebuilding is the strengthening of the enforcement of the law to generate legitimacy and reduce impunity in the administration of justice, as long innocence or guilt is determined by due process and an unrestricted commitment to Human Rights, independently of the social or group identity of the individual.

In order to be sustainable, the process of violence reduction must involve the largest number of social actors possible and begin to break down, slowly but surely, the cycles of violence and estrangement among government, civil society, and community.

As part of the "Project to Support the Reduction of Violence in El Salvador", financed by the European Union, Interpeace defined a strategy that involves different

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levels of intervention. The perspective employed by Interpeace assumed that the viability of the violence reduction process in El Salvador depended on the capacity of diverse social actors to generate links and synergies between the political decisions taken at a national level and the deep social roots of the gang phenomenon in the country.

Interpeace' strategy also assumed that violence reduction, as one of the central processes for Peacebuilding in the country, could not only limit its scope to one group of actors. On the contrary, the multicausal and contextual nature of

violence requires comprehensive strategies that address the problem from different social levels.

In this sense, the Interpeace approach of Track 6 in El Salvador assumed that as part of the operation framework it was necessary to consider the government authorities as part of Track 1, especially those involved with public security. Also included in this track were the different international organizations and aid agencies. As part of Track 2, Interpeace identified the strategic contribution of the private sector, civil society organizations, and municipal authorities to the violence reduction process. Finally, Track 3 is made up of the gangs as represented by their national and local leaders as well as the communities where they live. Even though gangs originate in and are part of the community, the violence they exercise in them has led to an ever greater estrangement between the gangs and the rest of the non-gang community, thereby creating horizontal divisions that have aggravated the dynamics of fear and violence that have characterized Salvadoran society during the last decades. The distinction is important given that gangs represent a specific sector of the popu-

lation that, for different reasons, has found in its group identity an element that differentiates it from the rest of society. At the same time, from a perspective of Peacebuilding, gangs gave proof of a willingness to change, even though they are part of the problem of violence in the country, and become thereby part of the solution to the problem.

The Interpeace Track 6 focus therefore identified opportunities to shorten the distances that separate the actors at each social level and contribute through participation and dialogue to generate synergies to reduce violence in the country.

Government and civil society: bridging the gap between Tracks 1 and 2

One of the effects of decades of violence in El Salvador was the estrangement among social actors. In this sense, the truce, even though it brought down the incidence of homicides in the country, did not lower the level of political confrontation that it caused when it was announced.

In this context, one of the fundamental aspects of Interpeace's work in the country aims to foster various processes which will close the gaps that separate estranged actors by building bridges of dialogue and communication to create synergies and provide legitimacy for the violence reduction process. For this reason, one of Interpeace's strategic objectives was support of initiatives that proposed dialogues at a national level to address the issue of violence reduction.

Regardless of the importance of dialogue as a means of shortening the distance and lowering the confrontation among political and social actors on the issue of gangs, the different proposals for dialogue that have been put forward in El Salvador have been constrained fundamentally due to the perception by various actors of a lack of legitimacy and clarity regarding the objectives of those who convene. In addition, some proposals for dialogue lost support when they were perceived as part of the electoral campaign of one or another political party.

For Interpeace, the strategic character of a dialogue in the Salva-

doran context assumes that the participation of the government and the political elite is based on a clear definition of the importance of listening to the voices of social actors – in this case the gangs – who can make a contribution to violence reduction in the country and who require conditions of a structural nature such as access to employment, education, and productive opportunities, all of which involve a wider social effort that includes other key sectors such as private business and civil society.

However, the strategic character of dialogue is also subject to another central element of Interpeace's perspective on Peacebuilding: empowering local actors. This means that a process of dialogue is sustainable and will generate expected results in terms of strengthening confidence among actors, if the very same actors who identify the need for dialogue demonstrate the necessary will to carry through with it.

During the years 2013-2014, political conditions in El Salvador have not been conducive to foster a process of dialogue at a national scale. Even though some ac-

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tors accept the importance of including the gangs in the dialogue, there is also an implied risk due to the lack of clarity by the government, the actions of the media which is adverse, the existence of laws that restrict direct work with gangs, and State institutions that openly oppose any work that involves the gangs.

This has caused repercussions in civil society and the private sector, with some exceptions, and has limited their participation in the process of violence reduction; this also reflects an estrangement between these two sectors and the government that has resulted in low levels of mutual trust.

Photo credit: Interpeace

The strategy and outlook of Interpeace recognizes that the processes of social change are not linear and require an understanding of the social and political context in order to identify the adequate opportunities and moments to encourage the processes. After recognizing that necessary conditions do not exist at this moment for a dialogue, Interpeace implemented a series of discussions to lay the political groundwork by bringing together different sectors of society to hear their perspective on the problems of insecurity and violence in the country and the solutions that the sectors consider to be the most adequate.

This is the first step in a process that must still overcome different stages but that has a strategic objective, namely to find the mechanisms that will bring together actors who have been separated until now.

Civil society and the private sector: bridging the gap between Tracks 2 and 3

Violence reduction in El Salvador requires comprehensive actions that address both the immediate causes of the phenomenon of the gangs as well as the causes of a structural character that permeate society. In this sense, Interpeace's approach considers that the participation of key actors of the so-cioeconomic dimension of society is fundamental, such as the private sector and the rest of civil society. That is why Interpeace's work is focused on the relation between these sectors (Track 2) and between these and the rest of society, specifically the gangs (Track 3).

In this manner and with the aim in mind to facilitate the participation of the Salvadoran private sector in the violence reduction process, Interpeace has supported the institutional strengthening of the "Fundación Humanitaria" (Humanitarian Foundation), which was set up in 2013 to bring together representative individuals from the private sector and thereby provide joint support for productive initiatives that look to the rehabilitation and reinsertion of populations linked to gangs. At the same time, the participation of the private sector, as a generator of productive and job-related opportunities for the population at large, is fundamental to reverse the precarious conditions that define the social and economic context in which gangs find their reason for being. At this level, Interpeace seeks to close the gap that violence created between the private sector (Track 2) and the community, in-cluding the gangs (Track 3), which translates into the exclusion of large social groups from the job market thereby leading some sectors of society to find means to generate income in the illegal economy.

Support for the Humanitarian Foundation also aims to strengthen the interaction between the private sector and the rest of Salvadoran civil society with a view in mind to generate synergies that result in comprehensive actions in support of the violence reduction process. In this sense, Interpeace has supported efforts by the Pastoral Initiative for Life and Peace (Iniciativa Pastoral por la Vida y la Paz), which was created by representatives of evangelical and catholic churches to promote a broad-based participation of civil society in support of the violence reduction process. This includes the participation of the Humanitarian Foundation as part of the effort to bring together the private sector and civil society in general.

Even though both the process of institutional strengthening of the Humanitarian Foundation and support for the Pastoral Initiative for Life and Peace have been part of the strategy implemented by Interpeace to contribute to the violence reduction process in El Salvador, different factors have limited a more active participation by the private sector, on the one hand, and increased that of the Pastoral Initiative for Life and Peace, on the other. High levels of mistrust still persist among the actors of civil society and between these and the government authorities. From the perspective of Interpeace, this situation represents one of the challenges that the violence reduction process must overcome.

Municipality, community, and gangs: bridging the gap between Tracks 2 and 3

Interpeace's strategy has also identified the need to assist in a number of initiatives that bring together local authorities (Track 2), the gangs, and the community (Track 3). Work at these two levels has two fundamental implications. In the first place, it seeks to strengthen the interaction between municipal authorities and the rest of society. Municipal authorities can make an important contribution to the processes of social change in view of the fact

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that they are placed closer to the immediate needs of the people and can, with greater diligence, establish bridges of communication and cooperation with active social groups in the municipality.

In the second place, Interpeace considers that the restitution of the social fabric and confidence-building between gangs and the community is basic for Peacebuilding. This means that at the horizontal level in Track 3 (community) there was a need to develop mechanisms that would allow for communication and cooperation between the community and the willingness to change as expressed by the gangs.

Subsequently, Interpeace's strategy focused on two aspects. On the one hand, support for the creation and operation of a network of community facilitators within the framework of the violence reduction process, and on the other, support for the work undertaken in the eleven municipalities declared free of violence.

The objective of the network of community facilitators is to contribute to the prevention and reduction of violence by mediating and facilitating in the resolution of conflicts between gangs and between these and the community. The network is made up of a group of young people committed to the violence reduction process. At a horizontal level, the network has served as a bridge to bring the gangs closer to the community. Members of the network began to participate in communal activities through the various forms of social organization that exist in the communities, among them committees, associations, and sports groups. This allowed for the members of the gangs to express their willingness to change by cooperating in community activities such as cleaning up a park, painting walls, and participating in social

and recreational activities. The principal effect of this was to provoke a change in perception about the attitudes of the gangs in the community in addition to providing legitimacy to the changes that made possible an improvement in community living.

In 2013, the violence reduction process was applied in the territories where the gangs interact daily with the community. Under this initiative, the authorities in eleven municipalities that had declared themselves "free of violence" publicly recognized their commitment to contribute to the pacification efforts launched by the gangs and to seek ways in which to support educational, economic, and social activities that would strengthen the change in attitude expressed by the gangs in their territories.

In El Salvador, municipal authority is autonomous and mayors are duly elected. Due to the excessive centralization of the State in El Salvador, municipal authorities have always maintained much closer links with people in their jurisdiction than the national government. For this reason, the commitment of the eleven municipalities "free of violence" repre-

sented a step forwards in the strengthening of the violence reduction process insofar as they laid the foundation of one the pillars of the Interpeace approach to Peacebuilding: empowering local actors of the process of social change, which leads in turn to a process that is participatory and transparent because of the involvement of society.

During the first phase of this process, the then ministerial authorities offered to support the mayors who expressed their commitment to the violence reduction process. However, due to the frequent changes of heart at the national executive level regarding the process, the support expected by the mayors never arrived. The continuity of the process then depended on the willingness of the mayors to devise creative means to support it.

From Interpeace's perspective, support for the various initiatives to strengthen the communication and coordination links among the mayors of the eleven municipalities "free of violence" means strengthening the cohesion of local actors, which in turn must be complemented by an improved interaction with civil society and

the private sector, which is one the challenges of the process.

The strengthening of the collaborative relationship between the municipal authorities (Track 2) and the community including the gangs (Track 3) has generated positive results that, albeit modest, demonstrate the possibility of transforming the fragile social interactions at the communal level. In some municipalities one can observe how gang members have had the opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to change by engaging in productive activities that allow for job-related and social rehabilitation and reinsertion. This leads to a better perception about the gangs from community members and, at the same time, translates into improved legitimacy and confidence by the community towards the local authorities.

All this is possible thanks to the interactions among the different levels of society that enable actors to bridge a gap which, in other contexts, would not have allowed them to start a process for the establishment of collaborative relations based on trust. However, these interactions are still fragile due, fundamentally, to a scarcity

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of financial resources in the municipalities, on the one hand, and to political mistrust and the restrictions of anti-gang legislation that limit the actors' willingness to participate more fully in the violence reduction process, on the other.

In recognition of the importance to overcome these limitations and continue the process of strengthening interactions and cooperation among the various levels of society, Interpeace has begun a process to support the eleven municipali-

ties "free of violence" by means of the project "Comprehensive initiatives for the prevention of violence in the municipalities free of violence in El Salvador" which aims to strengthen the capacities of local actors around issues of Peacebuilding and conflict transformation. At the same time, Interpeace seeks to provide technical support to local governments for the creation of job opportunities and entrepreneurship for young people at high social risk. Finally, the project looks to contribute to increasing the capacities of local authorities by improving the coordination among the eleven municipalities based on participatory processes that are part of the violence reduction process.

Concluding remarks

The social change associated with violence reduction in El Salvador has demonstrated the need to integrate the various social levels through a widely-based participation of all actors relevant to the problem of violence, including the gangs. The willingness to transform expressed by the gangs is just the beginning of a long process that, in order to remain sustainable, requires the involvement of all of society. As outlined in Interpeace's focus, this efforts must include a strengthening of the horizontal collaborative links among the three levels of society (Tracks 1, 2, and 3) in order to strengthen the vertical interactions among them and thereby achieve the ideal integration resulting in Track 6 (Track 1 + Track 2 + Track 3 = Track 6).

This hope involves a number of challenges:

At a horizontal level of Track 1, Peacebuilding requires from the State a greater degree of clarity regarding its role in the face of the necessary paradigm change when the voice of the gangs is included in the violence reduction process. Along similar lines, the participation of the international community requires an improved level of comprehension of the complexities involved in the inclusion of illegal actors in the processes of violence prevention and reduction in contexts where the illegality of those actors can only be explained in terms of the deep social roots of the phenomena of violence and criminality. This also requires better coordination such that the activities supported by international aid agencies are properly integrated in the various levels of prevention in order to achieve the greatest impact.

At the level of Track 2, a greater opening and support for civil society is required in the face of the challenge represented by the involvement of illegal actors, in this case the gangs, in processes of violence reduction. This challenge reaffirms the need for a broadly-based and honest dialogue which includes all relevant social actors involved in the problem of violence that will allow for concrete agreements and solutions regarding the role of gangs in the reduction of violence.

This also implies a need for an active participation by the private sector through the creation of job opportunities and productive ventures to overcome the socio-economic challenges involved in violence reduction. The private sector, civil society, and the government must face these challenges jointly, especially within a context of economic frailty which the country is experiencing.

At the level of Track 3, one of the principal challenges is the strengthening of the initiatives undertaken in the eleven municipalities free of violence in order ensure the sustainability of the violence reduction process in the country. While consolidating that which has been achieved up to this moment, it will be necessary for other municipalities to join the effort in order to extend the violence reduction process to additional local contexts.

For the gangs committed to the violence reduction process, the challenge consists in recognizing the fact that even though the truce resulted in a ceasefire among them, they must now address the implications that the division of territories has for the communities and for society at large. This will be a first step in the formal process of reconciliation among the gangs and between them and the communities affected by violence.

This takes us to a key challenge involved in the sustainability of the violence reduction process: how the voice of the victims of violence will be taken into account. A response to the voice of the victims of violence among gangs implies defining paths for action along the three social levels we have described.

The perspective of Interpeace's Track 6 assumes that once work has advanced in each of the three tracks it will then be possible to continue and intensify the efforts to bridge the gaps among different social levels and propose, in comprehensive terms, a country-wide agenda that includes solutions of a national character to overcome the immediate causes of violence as well as the structural deficits that underlie the social contexts in which violence propagates.