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Breaking the pattern of deadlock in the Cyprus Peace Process

Lessons learned from the Security Dialogue Initiative in Cyprus

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About Peacebuilding in Practice Papers

Interpeace's Peacebuilding in Practice Papers (PiP) are designed to showcase high-level learnings from its programme work. PiP findings are often drawn from in-depth evaluation processes and reflections from Interpeace's programme teams. PiP aims to contribute to greater knowledge and learning not only by Interpeace teams but also the broader peacebuilding sector.

Reference Guide

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Executive Summary

This Peacebuilding in Practice report summarizes key lessons from the Security Dialogue Initiative (SDI). This two-year programme launched in Cyprus by Interpeace and its local partner, the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), sought to support the Cyprus Peace Process. The report explores how peacebuilding approaches combining participatory research, public engagement, and expert input can help address seemingly intractable issues in protracted conflicts such as Cyprus.

Interpeace and SeeD began this initiative in 2016, in a context of unprecedented progress in the UN-facilitated negotiations between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaderships. The opening of the last negotiation dossier on security and guarantees raised hope for the first time in 40 years that an agreement was within reach. It however, also triggered concerns over the antagonistic and entrenched positions of Track 1 negotiators on security, mainly focused on whether Turkish troops and the guarantor power system could be maintained if an agreement were to be reached.

Given the importance of the dossier, the SDI was launched to identify innovative solutions to address the security needs and concerns of both communities and increase the likelihood of negotiating a settlement that could pass popular referenda. The first phase

began with a comprehensive threat and risk assessment to better understand the fears of the two communities and garner solutions to address those real and perceived threats.¹ Using a combination of participatory research, dialogue and international expertise, SeeD then designed alternative security proposals and tested them with both communities. A [White Paper for a Revised Security Architecture in Cyprus](#) emerged from this process and was shared with decision-makers and the public at key moments of the peace process, helping shift the security narrative from a militaristic approach to one that prioritizes common security and endogenous resilience. More specifically, the SDI achieved two key results:

1. It informed negotiators' decision to divide the security and guarantees dossier into sub-chapters addressing issues of governance, domestic security, implementation security, and external security – not just external security; and
2. It infused new options into the UN “Implementation Monitoring Framework” presented by UNSG Antonio Guterres to guide negotiations on security, creating a zone of possible agreement between the parties.

Despite the collapse of the peace talks in July 2017, the shift in the framing of the security dossier at the Track 1 level represents an

¹ SeeD (2016). “Cyprus Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index”. SCORE website. Online [link](#).

important milestone for the Cyprus Peace Process. Based on an external evaluation of the SDI's impact, this report presents key lessons and reflections to consider when supporting the negotiation and sustainable implementation of peace agreements.

- **Participatory research and peace polling data, combined with expert policy recommendations, can support peace processes by unlocking seemingly intractable issues.** When antagonistic positions stall Track 1 level negotiations, engaging citizens and experts in the search of new solutions on a specific issue can help deconstruct entrenched narratives. It is also an important tool to consider to legitimise significant decisions taken at the Track 1 level which impact the lives of citizens not “at the table”, and enhance potential solutions’ sustainability.
- **Research recommendations need to not only be timely, specific and targeted to bear on policy-making, but most critically, embedded in the process.** The SDI had the influence it did because it would not only generate good ideas based on robust scientific evidence, but ensured key players could make use of them. Building on its reputation in Cyprus for high-quality, inter-communal research, SeeD cultivated relationships with actors whose positions it sought to inform, gave them concrete proposals – not just

research on the nature of the challenge they faced – and delivered information in time to act on it.

- **Impacting public opinion requires time and resources.** Negotiations have better chances to succeed when peace is supported by a majority of citizens and political gains clearly appear to decision-makers. To impact the public at large, peace practitioners should 1) plan targeted communication strategies with enough resources for broad awareness-raising campaigns; 2) carefully translate evidence and proposals into clear messages accessible to policy-makers and the broader public; and 3) reach beyond “the usual suspects” and engage more sceptical groups, actors and media around the values and direction of the Peace Process.
- **Flexibility and attention to context are essential to support fast-evolving peace processes and “do no harm”.** The operating environment of an ongoing peace process evolves quickly and calls for constant monitoring and adaptations. Given the dynamic nature of the Cyprus negotiations, SeeD remained flexible in its approach to providing evidence to decision-makers, and stayed in touch with the broader public to preserve a positive impact on the peace process.

Broader Reflections on Supporting Peace Processes

- **Achieving peace is a sustained process that needs long-term investment and flexibility.** It is important for donors to adopt a long-term view and allow enough time and resources to prepare for a positive outcome of formal negotiations. The development of a clear funding framework, with short-term, medium-term and long-term goals and different time horizons, can help progress towards this objective.
- **It is well established that inclusion, openness and transparency are *sine-qua-non* conditions for effective and sustainable peace processes – but the question remains “how”.** In peace processes, the creation of linkages and information flows between negotiation teams, civil society and the wider public can help foster inclusive and constructive dialogue. This involves regularly sharing the options under consideration for the settlement, offering the possibility for citizens to express their views and formulate alternative proposals, and incorporating this feedback in peace negotiations to ensure the settlement plan resonates with public priorities.
- **Postponing preparations on the most intractable issues of a settlement hinders its success.** When designing the structure of a peace process, national and international actors should seek to prepare the ground for resolving the most sensitive issues through early research, public engagement and confidence-building initiatives, to avoid leaving critical and dividing discussions for the final rounds of negotiations.
- **Making regional stakeholders part of the solution is difficult but necessary. One solution is to create the public buy-in through expanding the process to the constituency of regional powers.** Engaging regional actors in peace negotiations without undermining the sovereignty of conflict-affected parties requires a difficult balancing act. Expanding participatory mechanisms to their populations, for instance through direct consultations or a collaboration of think tanks, can be a way to trigger their interest, inform their positions and find areas of consensus between the negotiating parties.

Background on the Cyprus Peace Process

Shortly after Cyprus gained independence in 1960, hostilities between the Greek Cypriot (GC) community and the Turkish Cypriot (TC) community escalated into widespread inter-communal violence. While sporadic violence continued over the years, the situation worsened in 1974, when a coup d'état ordered by the Greek military junta was followed by the invasion of the Turkish army. Ever since, Cyprus has been geographically and demographically divided between two *de facto* autonomous entities separated by a buffer zone: the recognized EU member Republic of Cyprus, controlling two-thirds of the island, and the self-proclaimed Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey. The ceasefire has been monitored by three guarantor states, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, which have committed themselves to finding a peaceful solution to the dispute.

For over five decades, the United Nations and other international actors have invested significant time and resources to assist the divided island in peace negotiations, with mixed results. In April 2004 the “Annan plan”, negotiated by the UN with the Cypriot leaders and presented to referenda in the two communities, was rejected by Greek Cypriots by a 75.8% majority, while 64.9% of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour. This failure was partly attributed to the deep disconnect and

distrust between political negotiations and the general public, with communities not sufficiently aware of the peace process taking place behind closed doors, nor informed of the possible solutions and arrangements that can address their concerns.

After a round of talks that ultimately stalled between 2007-2012, the Cyprus Peace Process officially resumed in May 2015, through the facilitation of former UN Special adviser on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide. Despite major advances on key dossiers after two rounds of talks in Switzerland in January and July 2017, the parties have not been able to reach a final agreement. The talks ended unsuccessfully in Crans-Montana on 7 July 2017, in part due to what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres designated in a report as the negotiating parties’ lack of “trust and determination ... to seek common ground through mutual accommodation”.² The premature termination of the conference ended a 28-month process which had created unprecedented hopes for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the reunification of the island.

Since then, the political climate in Cyprus has not been conducive to a resumption of formal negotiations to reach a settlement. The overall “peace fatigue” experienced by the population is fed by a lack of clarity and

² United Nations Security Council (2018). “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus”, S/2018/919. Online [link](#).

strategic outlook at the political level, the ongoing blame game between the leaders from the two communities, as well as geopolitical tensions at the regional level. In his latest reports to the UN Security Council, Antonio Guterres reiterated the availability

of his Good Offices for a resumption of talks, should the leaders demonstrate their readiness to re-engage and their commitment to enter with a mind-set and willingness for compromise.³

Why a New Security Architecture for Cyprus?

The Cyprus Peace process is structured around the negotiation of six main dossiers: governance and power sharing, territory, property, economy, EU affairs, and security and guarantees. This last chapter is the most sensitive and disputed of all. Understood to be the last dossier to settle in order to reach a comprehensive agreement, it covers the extent, size and terms of international security arrangements for the island, including the continued presence of the Turkish army on the Turkish Cypriot side of the island. It also outlines the different institutions (police, intelligence service, judiciary, independent commissions) that would provide internal security to a Federal Cyprus in the post-settlement era.

For decades, discussions on the security and guarantees dossier have been locked in a zero-sum dynamic, with Greek Cypriot negotiators strongly opposing the continuation of

Turkish security guarantees and troop presence, which, by contrast, is strongly defended by Turkish Cypriot negotiators. At the community level, it has traditionally been the subject of fears, concerns and misunderstandings. Research conducted in 2015 showed that most Greek Cypriots did not understand why Turkish Cypriots would feel insecure and discriminated in the event of a settlement, while Turkish Cypriots failed to appreciate how the 1974 military intervention instilled fear of Turkish control within the other community.⁴

At the core of this polarization lies a hard, militaristic vision of security entrenched in the narratives of negotiators, and revolving mostly around troops and intervention rights. This narrowly-defined approach denied the existence of various other, shared security needs and fears within Cypriot communities, about the functionality of the

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Interpeace and Cyprus 2015 (2011). "Solving the Cyprus Problem: Hopes and Fears". Online [link](#).

state, everyday security, sense of justice and the implementation of a settlement.⁵ Given the importance and the intractable nature of the security and guarantees dossier, it was urgent to investigate those needs to find

solutions acceptable to both communities and their leaders. Only then could a comprehensive settlement plan be negotiated and have a chance to pass popular referenda on the two sides of the island.

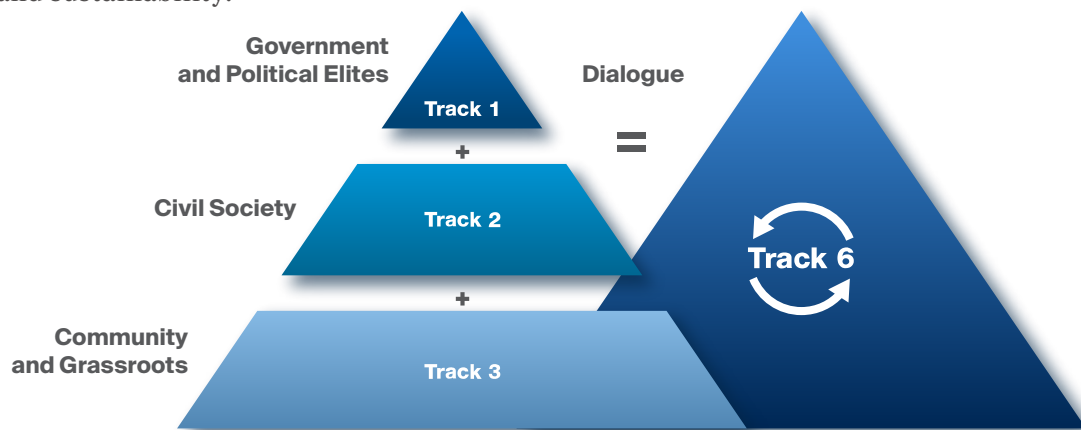
About the programme

Since 2009, Interpeace has focused on connecting Track 1 level negotiations – taking place between Cypriot leaders, the UN and international actors – with civil society and the wider population in Cyprus. This

approach, theorized by Interpeace as “Track 6”, has been implemented through its partner – and the island’s first bi-communal think tank – the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD).

Interpeace’s ‘Track 6’ Approach

Interpeace’s operational work is based on a Track 6 approach, which seeks to engage in collaborative efforts – Track 1 (International actors/national government/decision-makers) + Track 2 (civil society) + Track 3 (local actors/grassroots) – in order to address peacebuilding issues. This approach helps to ensure that high-level policies reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge, which contributes to the policies’ legitimacy and sustainability.



In the Cyprus context, the Track 6 Approach has been used since 2009 to not only work at the track 1, 2, and 3 levels in isolation, but to build and strengthen the linkages between them in support to the peace process and to enhance social cohesion.

⁵ Cyprus 2015 (2009). “Investigating the Future: An in-depth study of Public Opinion in Cyprus?”. Available online [here](#).

In October 2016, Interpeace and SeeD initiated the “Security Dialogue Initiative” (SDI) as part of a larger programme aimed to support the Cyprus Peace Process and increase its chances of success.⁶ Back then, significant progress by the two Cypriot leaders had inspired hope that an agreement was within reach, a feeling strengthened by the opening of the *security and guarantees dossier* that was left unaddressed in previous rounds of negotiations. Building on the lessons from the “Annan plan” rejection, the **objective** of the SDI was to identify security options that would make both communities simultaneously secure while also being acceptable to the three guarantor states and the wider international community, and to introduce such options into public discourse and the negotiations.

More specifically, this initiative sought to:

- Reframe the basis of the security dossier negotiation from a zero-sum dispute around hard security approaches, to an

investigation of the needs of people from both communities to feel secure, and possible ways of addressing these.

- Articulate the real needs of people by **going beyond the positional bargaining** of the two respective leaderships, which left the security discourse stuck in inherited narratives, at all levels.
- Generate **specific solutions** for the different aspects of the security problem which can serve as the basis for reaching an agreement in the Cyprus negotiations.

As negotiating teams began talks on the security dossier, SeeD and Interpeace designed a participatory research process, between October 2016 and July 2017, to identify new options for Track 1 consideration. Through a series of focus groups, SeeD identified TC and GC fears and subsequently consulted international experts to develop a proposed security architecture addressing those concerns. Using both public polling

⁶ The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations provided support to the program, with a strong focus on monitoring and evaluation. The views expressed in the article are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government.



UN Photo - Eskinder Debebe

and focus groups, SeeD then tested whether these proposals would be acceptable to the public of both communities. Finally, SeeD used this information to refine its proposal for a “New Security Architecture for a Federal Cyprus”, and presented it to representatives of the TC and GC communities, the UN, other diplomats, and the public, to inform the discourse and negotiations about the security and guarantees dossier.those concerns. Using both public polling and

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Application of Participatory Research methodology – 5 steps

- 1. Bottom-up threat and risk analysis.** The first phase of the research employed qualitative methods to reframe the dialogue on security and start from people’s needs rather than the established political solutions preferred by each respective community. Through 11 grassroots focus groups (women, young people, IDPs etc.), over 20 interviews with policy makers, and open dialogue, and consultation with local and international security experts, SeeD identified what makes Cypriots feel insecure today with respect to the prospect of a federal state and developed new proposals to address those concerns.
- 2. Designing security measures and proposals.** During the second phase, SeeD taxonomized the different fears, threats and risks, (i.e. economic security, state security, political security), and designed various proposals and measures together with a core group of security experts.
- 3. Testing alternative proposals.** The third phase included a quantitative opinion poll based on a representative random sample of 3,000 people (1,500 from each community). It aimed to better investigate the security needs island-wide, understand the attitudes of the general public towards the proposals developed with experts, and to evaluate the acceptability of these alternative security formulas. By doing so, it clarified a zone of possible agreement, within which the parties could both conclude it was in their interest to reach a settlement.

4. Building the New Security Architecture. This proposed New Security Architecture for a Federal Cyprus, based on the findings from the previous phases, was revised and fine-tuned based on a comprehensive reflection and validation process. SeeD organized six focus groups, numerous reflection and dialogue meetings, presentations and an expert vetting exercise where both national and international experts provided their critiques, insights and feedback.

5. 5. Dissemination and policy-influence. The successively refined SDI proposals were disseminated to Track 1 stakeholders from December 2016 to July 2017 through high-level briefings and presentations, to maximize impact on ongoing negotiations. In the lead up to the June Conference on Cyprus, SeeD engaged intensively with all conference parties – Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and negotiation teams, UNFICYP, UN Good Offices, guarantor countries and relevant international actors – and shared the SDI recommendations to overcome divergences on the security and guarantees dossier. Throughout programme implementation, research findings were also presented to relevant civil society organizations, Cypriot political parties and media outlets, to create a public atmosphere more conducive to constructive dialogue and acceptance of convergences on the security dossier.

Key results of the programme

Following the collapse of the formal peace talks, SeeD and Interpeace conducted a collective assessment of the SDI impact on the positions and narratives of Track 1 stakeholders between October 2016 and July 2017. This “Outcome Harvesting” exercise highlighted that the SDI had contributed to expanding the conversation on security among Track 1 negotiators and the public by:

- **Broadening the scope of what the parties discussed as part of the security chapter.**

In January 2017, following the Geneva Conference on Cyprus where SeeD held a series of side-meetings with negotiating parties, the UN Envoy announced the division of the security and guarantees chapter into sub-dossiers that would address issues of governance, domestic security, implementation security, and external security.⁷ This decision marked an important shift from the polarized and militaristic vision of security entrenched in negotiators’ narratives since the 1960s, which revolved solely around whether the guarantor powers could have any troops stationed on the island and have the right to intervene. Several Track 1 officials consulted during the programme evaluation agreed that this shift was informed by the SDI threat assessment, which reflected the population’s concerns in relation to “human, economic,

ontological and social aspects” of security. By acknowledging that security in Cyprus goes beyond the issue of external threats, Track 1 negotiators showed their readiness to reframe the security dossier from a zero-sum dispute around the text of Treaties, to a response to people’s real security needs.

- **Infusing new options into the UN “Implementation Monitoring Framework” presented by UNSG Antonio Guterres to guide negotiations.**

This framework, shared by UNSG Guterres with the negotiating parties (including Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom) ahead of the Crans-Montana talks, covered the conditions and parameters for a peaceful transition and aimed to generate confidence in all parties that the settlement would be implemented as agreed upon. In the report detailing the mission of his Good Offices, UNSG Guterres underlined that “key positions and indications of possible openings were put forward by relevant parties on the issues related to security and guarantees”, and that by the time the Conference closed, “participants had significantly advanced in developing a security concept”.⁸ The “Guterres Framework” was partly inspired by the proposals made in the SDI White Paper

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⁸ United Nations Security Council (2018). “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus”, S/2018/919. Online [link](#).

for a Revised Security Architecture in Cyprus, which outlined innovative solutions and mechanisms to secure the implementation of an agreement. Those included the creation of mixed police forces, an Early-Warning/Early-Response system (EWER), a Ministry of Reconstruction and Social Cohesion and the development of an effective and communally-blind Police and Judiciary. The discussion of those different topics at the negotiation table in June 2017 constitutes in itself a noteworthy evolution from the traditional “zero-sum game” postures on the security dossier. It also revealed a degree of readiness to think in new, practical terms about the future role of guarantors in a federal Cyprus, and mechanisms required to safeguard the security of all communities. two vital components for a sustainable settlement.

- Postponing preparations on the most intractable issues of a settlement hinders its success. All too often, debates on the most difficult and sensitive topics of a peace agreement are left untouched or postponed until the very last moment. This means certain dimensions of the problem are left undiscussed, all the while knowing that communities or leaders find themselves completely opposite on these exact issues. In Cyprus, the SDI should have started as soon as the talks resumed in 2015, not when they were about to open the chapter of security and guarantees. When designing the structure of a peace process, national and international policy makers should seek to prepare the ground for resolving the most sensitive issues through early research, public

engagement and confidence-building initiatives, to avoid leaving dividing discussions for the final rounds of negotiations.

- Making regional stakeholders part of the solution is difficult but necessary – One solution is to create the public buy-in through expanding the process to the constituency of regional powers. Conflict dynamics are rarely confined to the boundaries of a nation state, with international actors and interests often influencing the outcome of peace negotiations. The question of how peacebuilding and peace-making actors can positively engage with regional actors to play a positive and supporting role for a process is a recurrent challenge for which there remains little precedent. Engaging those stakeholders in the search for solutions without undermining the sovereignty of conflict-affected parties requires a difficult balancing act from organisations supporting peace processes. In Cyprus, the lack of access of the SDI team to some guarantor countries most likely hindered its impact on the outcome of negotiations. Should the peace process resume, the SDI could be expanded to adopt a regional scope, for instance through a collaboration of think tanks, to identify and address the concerns and security needs of Turkish and Greek citizens. Involving regional powers’ constituency in the search for innovative options could be a way to inform the position of their leaders at the negotiations table. This approach to creating the public buy-in and support for peace across boundaries does require

the unique alignment of incentives across national boundaries, and future efforts in Cyprus ought to more seriously review

the entry points for this type of cross boundary approach.

What important lessons were learned?

After the programme ended in 2018, an external evaluation enabled Interpeace and SeeD to identify key lessons from its successes and shortcomings that could be applied to support peace processes in Cyprus and elsewhere around the globe.

- **Participatory research and peace polling data, combined with expert policy recommendations, can support peace processes by unlocking seemingly intractable issues.** All peace processes know moments of stalled or cut-off negotiations due to the parties' antagonistic positions on seemingly intractable issues. In these situations, engaging citizens in the search for new solutions can help address the root causes of the problem and deconstruct entrenched narratives at the Track 1 level. In Cyprus, the use of participatory research methods to assess what security meant to Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, demonstrated to Track 1 actors the gap between their historically inherited positions and their constituents' actual fears, anxieties and security needs. In addition to increasing

the legitimacy and inclusiveness of the recommendations developed with security experts, participatory research enhances stakeholders' buy-in to the results, by involving them both in the design and the production of the solutions. It is therefore an important tool to consider to legitimize significant decisions taken at the Track 1 level which impact the lives of citizens, and enhance the sustainability of potential solutions.

- **Research recommendations need to not only be timely, specific and targeted to bear on policy-making but most critically, embedded in the process.** Policy recommendations, even when emerging from high-quality research, rarely translate into direct action by decision-makers. During peace processes, the confidential nature of negotiations often hinders the emergence and/or integration of new proposals in discussions taking place behind closed doors. In Cyprus, the SDI was able to have the influence it did, in large part, due to its attention to process: it not only generated good ideas based on robust

scientific evidence, but also ensured key players make use of them. Building on its reputation in Cyprus for evidence-based, inter-communal research, SeeD cultivated relationships with actors whose positions it sought to inform, gave them concrete proposals – beyond defining the nature of the challenge they faced – and delivered information in time to act on it. SeeD’s outreach across the political spectrum enabled them to address a broad range of concerns, resulting in a proposal with a notable level of acceptance among the different parties.⁹

- **Impacting public opinion requires time and resources.** Track 1 stakeholders are more likely to find an agreement when peace is supported by a majority of citizens and political gains clearly appear to decision-makers. All peace processes should therefore create the conditions for popular awareness, pressure, and accountability for results from Track 1 negotiations. Informing public opinion at large has been identified as a challenge in the SDI. Despite the organization of 20 public outreach events and the publication of 70 articles in GC, TC and bicomunal papers, it appeared that the New Security Architecture was better known by Track 1 and 2 stakeholders than grassroot populations. An important lesson learned from this for future interventions is to 1) deliberately plan a targeted communication strategy with enough resources for broad awareness-raising campaigns, 2) carefully adapt the terminology and format used during

outreach activities to the target audience, and 3) reach beyond “the usual suspects” and engage more sceptical groups, actors and media around the values and direction of the Peace Process.

- **Flexibility and attention to context are essential to support fast-evolving peace processes and “do no harm”.** The operating environment of an ongoing peace process evolves quickly and calls for constant monitoring and adaptations. Given the dynamic nature of the Cyprus negotiations, SeeD remained flexible in its approach to providing evidence to decision-makers and the broader public. Early 2017, when the adoption of a controversial commemoration law by the Greek Cypriot Parliament caused a 3-month hiatus in the negotiations, SeeD interrupted its activities to present past research that sought to debunk public misperceptions of the contentious law. In the same way, SeeD and Interpeace revised their mid-term strategy following the unsuccessful closure of talks in Crans-Montana, as the political climate was no longer conducive to Track 1 discussions on the security and guarantees dossier. Instead, SeeD and Interpeace pivoted the SDI to investigate the longer-term challenge of gendered insecurities and women’s inclusion in the peace process. This adaptation not only preserved the legacy of the SDI, but also ensured that the programme would “do no harm” in a context of deep disappointment and peace fatigue among the population following the end of the talks.

⁹ The process implemented by SeeD was aligned with recognized ways of bringing research to bear on policy, such as captured by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) guidelines: [10 Things to Know about How to Influence Policy with Research](#).



Broader Reflections on Supporting Peace Processes

Building on the Cyprus experience, some key lessons and practices have been identified that may be of relevance to peace processes and the support of peace processes in other contexts, for both national and international actors.

- **Achieving peace is a sustained process that needs long-term investment and flexibility.** In protracted conflicts like Cyprus, donors and national governments tend to make funding available when there is a concrete and tangible prospect for success. While understandable, this practice disregards the need to support actions that maintain

the momentum for peace between rounds of Track 1 discussions and to prepare the ground for successful negotiations. These can include research and political engagement on possible solutions, multi-communal initiatives and confidence-building measures. While donors cannot be expected to fund processes in the hope of vague prospects for peace in the next 10 to 15 years, it is important to adopt a long-term view and allow enough time and resources to prepare for a positive outcome of formal negotiations. The development of a clear funding framework, with short-term, medium-term and long-term goals and different

time horizons, can help progress towards this objective. In that regard, the absence of formal talks in Cyprus should not prevent donors and decision-makers from facilitating intercommunal contact, funding confidence-building measures and supporting progress on property cases and security sector reforms.

- **It is well established that inclusion, openness and transparency are *sine-qua-non* conditions for effective and sustainable peace processes – the question remains not “why”, but “how”.** The idea that inclusiveness and transparency are key factors for success in peace processes is well known. But the persistent question facing peacebuilding and peace-making practitioners is not *whether there ought* to be inclusiveness – but *how* inclusiveness can be brought at the right time with the right actors. In the case of Cyprus, the importance of inclusiveness and public buy-in to negotiation outcomes was demonstrated by the rejection of the ‘Annan Plan’ in 2004. Yet, despite widespread knowledge of the importance of local ownership, peace processes are often still fixated on negotiations at-the-table, conducted in secrecy with top-level leaders only. This practice not only disconnects negotiations from the wider public but also fuels speculation, mistrust and conspiracy theories. The use of peace polling and participatory processes by policy-makers to accompany a track 1 process can help prevent rejection of peace accords, through creating linkages and information flows between negotiation teams, civil society and the

wider public. This involves regularly sharing options under consideration for the settlement and offering the possibility for civil society and the general public to express their views, evaluate and formulate alternative proposals. Public feedback can then be incorporated in peace negotiations and used to ensure that the peace plan resonates with public priorities. This approach is crucial to generate mutual trust and understanding, and to build a sense of public ownership over the outcomes of the peace talks, two vital components for a sustainable settlement.

- **Postponing preparations on the most intractable issues of a settlement hinders its success.** All too often, debates on the most difficult and sensitive topics of a peace agreement are left untouched or postponed until the very last moment. This means certain dimensions of the problem are left undiscussed, all the while knowing that communities or leaders find themselves completely opposite on these exact issues. In Cyprus, the SDI should have started as soon as the talks resumed in 2015, not when they were about to open the chapter of security and guarantees. When designing the structure of a peace process, national and international policy makers should seek to prepare the ground for resolving the most sensitive issues through early research, public engagement and confidence-building initiatives, to avoid leaving dividing discussions for the final rounds of negotiations.

- **Making regional stakeholders part of the solution is difficult but necessary. One solution is to create public buy-in through expanding the process to the constituency of regional powers.** Conflict dynamics are rarely confined to the boundaries of a nation state, with international actors and interests often influencing the outcome of peace negotiations. The question of how peacebuilding and peace-making actors can positively engage with regional actors to play a positive and supporting role for a process, is a recurrent challenge for which there remains little precedent. Engaging those stakeholders in the search for solutions without undermining the sovereignty of conflict-affected parties requires a difficult balancing act from organizations supporting peace processes. In Cyprus, the lack of access

of the SDI team to some guarantor countries most likely hindered its impact on the outcome of negotiations. Should the peace process resume, the SDI could be expanded to adopt a regional scope, for instance through a collaboration of think tanks, to identify and address the concerns and security needs of Turkish and Greek citizens. Involving regional powers' constituency in the search for innovative options could be a way to inform the position of their leaders at the negotiations table. This approach to creating public buy-in and support for peace across boundaries does require the unique alignment of incentives across national boundaries, and future efforts in Cyprus ought to more seriously review the entry points for this type of cross boundary approach.



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