

# Building Trust Across the Cyprus Divide

## Stories of cooperation

November 2011



## EC Cypriot Civil Society in Action Programme 2010–11

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## Introduction

This booklet presents summaries of seven case studies, and resulting findings, that form an integral component of INTRAC's research project on the role of civil society in building trust and reconciliation in Cyprus. The project is part of an EU-funded programme which aims to strengthen *"the role of civil society in the Turkish Cypriot Community and to promote the development of a conducive environment for the further development of trust, dialogue, co-operation and closer relationship between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities as an important step towards a solution to the Cyprus problem"*.<sup>1</sup> The INTRAC project builds on previous work in 2006–08 through the Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme that brought together civil society workers from both sides in common activities.<sup>2</sup> In the course of that programme, INTRAC, with its Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot consortium partners, observed some of the trust building effects of civil society interaction and the implications of these. This research takes these observations forward by providing more in-depth analysis about how trust-building takes place, including the factors that support or hinder it, the challenges that this presents, and how these challenges may be addressed.

The overall aim of the research project is to strengthen the process of reconciliation in Cyprus by enhancing the role played by civil society. The specific objective is to develop a greater understanding of this role so that stakeholders (civil society organisations [CSOs], civil society support organisations, those involved in policy development, and government and funders, including international bodies) can carry out that role more effectively in the future. This research will also contribute to more effective use of trust building techniques for CSOs and for civil society support agencies, thus increasing the likelihood of bicomunal cooperation and improving the efficiency of trust building elements in civil society support programmes. Finally, the project will make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge and learning on policy and practice in bicomunal and related civil society trust building and cooperation.

The main activities of the project centre on participatory research into the factors supporting and inhibiting bicomunal civil society activities in Cyprus and abroad. This includes: a literature review; semi-structured interviews with 105 stakeholders (including CSO representatives, donors, and policy makers); and seven case studies of CSOs in Cyprus. The findings are being disseminated through case studies, policy recommendations, practical tools for CSOs, academic journal articles, a practitioner workshop, and intensive, interactive CSO visits.

## The approach

The initial phase of the research identified ways in which civil society was contributing to building trust, including through:

- the development and maintenance of contacts and opportunities for interaction between the two communities
- helping to improve each community's knowledge and understanding of the other community
- the development of alliances and partnerships and sharing resources

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2007) 'Reconciliation, Confidence Building Measures and Support to Civil Society: Cypriot Civil Society in Action', available at <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tender/data/d52/AOF79952.doc> (retrieved 14 September 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.intrac.org/pages/en/ccssp2008.html](http://www.intrac.org/pages/en/ccssp2008.html) for more details.

- organising and taking part in bicomunal activities both for themselves and for the general public
- enabling members of each community to experience tangible benefits from their activity
- promoting confidence-building measures as well as an appreciation of interdependence
- developing the capacity of other organisations and projects within their own community.

As one representative of a major funding agency stated, “*the biggest success of CSOs is that they have established a basic level of trust that allows at least a basic level of interaction and relations (to develop)*”.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, civil society organisations are operating in a very difficult legislative, political and social context which discourages the development of civil society, let alone its involvement in peace building.

To deepen the understanding of how civil society is contributing to peace building in Cyprus and the challenges it faces, we conducted several case studies, summarised in this booklet. We adopted a social capital framework, consisting of the following indicators:

1. *Bonding social capital* refers to developing community infrastructure to enhance social assets and community activity.
2. *Bridging social capital* refers to how the organisation promotes engagement and builds bridges between the two main communities.
3. *Linking social capital* refers to the creation of linkages between an organisation and those sectors, agencies, and organisations with influence, power, and resources, including international bodies.

Bonding social capital is crucial because it provides a framework for analysing the extent to which civil society contributes to the development of an appropriate infrastructure (including social assets) that enables civil society to develop and, through this, enhance the potential to build bridges more effectively. Linking social capital captures the extent to which civil society in Cyprus can make the appropriate connections with key agencies and sectors. These linkages not only contribute to the longer term sustainability of CSOs, but are also necessary to enable civil society to make a meaningful contribution to peacebuilding through influencing and developing the appropriate processes and structures to support it. It was decided that a case study approach would be most appropriate for capturing these processes.

## The case studies

Each of the case studies represents a different aspect of civil society approaches to trust and peacebuilding work in Cyprus. They focus on different themes and operate in different contexts, presenting a small but representative sample of the different types of civil society work in this field.

- Case Study 1 – The Management Centre of the Mediterranean (MC-Med)
- Case Study 2 – NGO Support Centre (NGO SC)
- Case Study 3 – Akova Women’s Association (AWA)
- Case Study 4 – Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)
- Case Study 5 – Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC)
- Case Study 6 – The Kontea Cultural Heritage Circle Project
- Case Study 7 – Working with Young People (HASDER and Soma Akriton)

<sup>3</sup> See Gillespie, N., V. Georgiou, and S. Insay. (2011) ‘The role of civil society in building trust and reconciliation in Cyprus’, *ONTRAC* 48 (May 2011): 4–5.

## Case Study 1: Management Centre of the Mediterranean

### Introduction

The Management Centre of the Mediterranean (MC-Med or The Management Centre) is a non-governmental, non-profit support centre in the Turkish Cypriot community. It aims to contribute to sustainable organisational development and professional management systems based on international standards and to enhancing the role of civil society in policy making and the reconciliation process. MC-Med works with many local and international partners, including the NGO Support Centre (NGO SC) in the Greek Cypriot community (Case Study 2).

MC-Med operates several programmes, the main ones being: Civil Society and Reconciliation, Professional Development and Work-based Learning, Organisational and Economic Development, and Communication and Languages. The centre provides training, such as capacity building and diversity training, and conducts research both to inform its own strategy, and on behalf of other organisations, including identifying the needs and concerns of the community. Its programmes contribute to addressing management and development issues for CSOs as well as the private and public sector. The centre is located in Nicosia and its premises include rooms for holding meetings, workshops and training sessions, which MC-Med members and associates can use.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

Increasing the confidence of a community and its capacity is vital to improving community assets and community activity. MC-Med actively encourages participants in training sessions to engage in future opportunities and events. By thus encouraging engagement in community activity, MC-Med is also developing community leadership skills. These processes are essential for the development of a vibrant civil society and to create the pre-conditions for engagement between communities.

MC-Med, supported by the EU Commission, established an Independent Media Centre (IMC) that enables CSOs, media representatives and independent media experts to access, and contribute to, an Online News Agency Portal that delivers news from a civil society perspective. MC-Med's Civil Society and Reconciliation programme organises public discussions to inform the community about what a federal solution for Cyprus would entail, the economic benefits of reconciliation, and the community's role in this. The programme prioritises community concerns and emphasises the importance of preparing the two communities for a potential solution. In partnership with NGO SC and INTRAC, MC-Med was also involved in an 18-month, island-wide UNDP-ACT<sup>4</sup> Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme, helping to provide training, technical assistance, training of local trainers or consultants, organisational development planning, as well as toolkits and events. More recently, under the UNDP-funded ENGAGE project, MC-Med and NGO SC distributed grants to CSOs to support their cooperation and increase engagement between the two main communities. MC-Med, as part of ENGAGE, also provides technical assistance to CSOs in the Turkish Cypriot community to help them promote their work in both communities.

A key development in building connectedness within the community has been the MC-Med-led Cyprus NGO Network, established in 2006 and now including 13 organisations. The network contributes to the capacity building of the CSO sector by increasing the cooperation and sharing of experience and expertise between CSOs, and the effectiveness of civil society through collective action. The network aims to: provide services that encourage such cooperation and increase and strengthen the dialogue between CSOs in the Turkish Cypriot community; strengthen democratic participation within CSOs; and take part in decision making processes and activities at EU level.

Training events provide members with additional capacity-building opportunities and, through the Network and ENGAGE, emphasise the need for cooperation and a stronger collective voice. This will help enhance public trust in the CSO sector, enabling it to be seen as different in a positive,

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme – Action for Cooperation and Trust.



independent, and altruistic way from other sectors, including formal, and often discredited, party political activity. Public trust in CSOs is further bolstered by MC-Med's ability to match community needs and the activities they provide. Data from the CIVICUS civil society research project is invaluable to MC-Med in this regard. Having positive relationships with the media, for more effective events advertising and awareness, is also very important for connecting with the wider public and promoting participation in community activity.

*Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

MC-Med has been closely engaged with the Greek Cypriot community since its inception, through its close partnership with NGO SC, joint operation of ENGAGE, and most recently through its membership in the Cyprus Island-wide NGO Development Platform (CYINDEP), which brings together NGOs working on development issues in order to improve the effectiveness of their work and advocacy. MC-Med was also one of the leading founding organisations in the CCMC (Case Study 5).

MC-Med attempts to engage with the Greek Cypriot community, as well as to build the capacity of Turkish Cypriot CSOs, have been driven largely by recognition of the interdependence between the two communities and the role of civil society in servicing this interdependence. CYINDEP, ENGAGE, and CCMC are three of the most recent initiatives that acknowledge this. For example, one of the ways that ENGAGE is strengthening the role of civil society in reconciliation is through increasing the number of joint thematic initiatives created in order to demonstrate a common approach to island-wide issues, such as health and the environment.

MC-Med has successfully increased the willingness of Turkish Cypriot organisations and individuals to engage with the Greek Cypriot community through the structures it has helped to create, the bicomunal campaigns it has been involved in, and the programmes it has operated. Beneficiaries of the ENGAGE small grants programme, for example, have intimated that their projects have enabled participants from the two communities to build personal relations and that this contributes to overcoming prejudices.

*Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

MC-Med has developed formal contacts and cooperation with bodies within and outside the Turkish Cypriot community which reinforce its political and community influence. These include:

- Participation in the Cyprus NGO Network through which Turkish Cypriot CSOs have been empowered
- Participation in the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD), through the island-wide platform CYINDEP, which allows MC-Med to have a louder voice and presence in the European Union and opportunities for lobbying
- Cooperation with other international organisations including the Centre for Economic Development in Azerbaijan, TRIALOG, INTRAC, the UNDP, and other international funders.

MC-Med provides resources and shares information through its publications, website and through the NGO Network. Through ENGAGE and the Network, MC-Med also co-organised numerous events, including two major ones in June 2011 in partnership with the Cyprus 2015 project. The official representatives of the two Cypriot leaders attended the first of these, while representatives of the Environment Technical Committee, involved in the current political negotiations, attended the second. Significantly, the launching ENGAGE event in 2009, which brought together CSOs, representatives of the political leaders of both communities and influential individuals from Turkey and Greece, had been used as an opportunity to issue a declaration, signed by more than 50 CSOs, stating that civil society should be included in peace negotiations at the highest level if an agreement were to be sustainable. As ENGAGE was drawing to a close two years later, civil society representatives voiced their disappointment that civil society's role in the process was not more significant.

Finally, the NGO Network has also successfully campaigned against changes in the existing (outdated and inadequate) CSO legislation which would have made it more difficult for CSOs to operate collectively and independently. They gained support from the international community, partly through connections with CONCORD and the EU, stalled the approval of new undemocratic legislation, and drafted alternative CSO-friendly legislation based on international standards.

## Case Study 2: NGO Support Centre

### Introduction

The NGO Support Centre (NGO SC) is the main NGO support organisation in the Greek Cypriot community, which partners with Turkish Cypriot and international organisations, supports and represents Greek Cypriot groups, and delivers capacity building, networking, and trust and reconciliation programmes. This case study illustrates how NGO SC delivers such support, and how this contributes to peacebuilding and building bridges with the Turkish Cypriot community.

NGO SC aims to strengthen civil society in Cyprus through training, consulting, and technical services. In addition to facilitating events and communications to this end, it also raises awareness of the role of the third sector in developing transparent, democratic societies. The centre has a long-standing partnership with the Turkish Cypriot organisation MC-Med. It also has strong ties with several other NGOs of various sizes, local and central government authorities, international funders, and has more recently established contact with numerous media outlets.

The case study focuses mainly on two projects: ENGAGE and Celebrating Diversity and Volunteerism. ENGAGE, implemented jointly by NGO SC and MC-Med, provided opportunities for individuals and groups to actively participate in the process of peace and reconciliation. The project centred on capacity building, raising public awareness of the role of civil society in the peace process, and updating the CIVICUS report. Celebrating Diversity and Volunteerism was implemented by NGO SC and the Cyprus Turkish Association of Managers. The project promoted a more conducive environment for further development of trust, dialogue, cooperation, and closer relationships between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. It involved ten organisations, from both communities, working on issues concerning disadvantaged groups: the disabled, elderly, children, migrants, and illness-affected people, as well as women and those living in rural areas.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

One of the first steps in improving community assets and increasing community activity is to build the confidence and skills of the community, particularly its marginalised sections. ENGAGE targeted hard-to-reach sections of the community, and Celebrating Diversity and Volunteerism targeted organisations working with disadvantaged groups. NGO SC has sought to improve social cohesion within the community, as well as increase people's trust in organisations. Through involvement in various initiatives, NGO SC has fostered stronger partnerships and connections between a wide range of CSOs working on related issues. Involvement in the CIVICUS civil society research project has allowed NGO SC to provide systematic consultation research into community-identified needs, to ensure a better match between activities and needs. NGO SC also partnered with INTRAC and MC-Med on the 2006–08 Cyprus Civil Society Strengthening Programme.

Sharing information is one of the main functions of NGO SC, and it provides information about ongoing CSO activities on its website, email list, and leaflets. It has also secured the cooperation of a newspaper (*Alitheia*) and radio station (Astra) to include content about CSOs and their work. Advertisements created by a television station are also aired to both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. This media cooperation is a major achievement for NGO SC as it represents a breakthrough in improving what has been relatively ineffective coverage.

#### *Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

ENGAGE was developed to strengthen the role of civil society in the reconciliation process, by fostering an increase in partnerships, networks, joint initiatives, and CSO-led policy positions, all supporting reconciliation. Through ENGAGE, groups from both communities have become more involved in bicomunal activities and developed good working relationships. This led to increased trust and a sense of interdependence that transcend divisive issues. As movement restrictions were eased in 2003, participation in bicomunal activities increased. ENGAGE is a

comprehensive example of effective approaches to strengthen this move into bicomunal activity, and has included staff and organisations from both communities in an agreed approach, with input from both sides on all aspects of the project. NGO SC is also involved with CYINDEP, along with MC-Med. NGO SC enables other organisations to establish contact and cooperation with groups from the other community.

Recognition of the interdependence of the two communities, and the role of civil society in serving this interdependence, drives these bicomunal efforts. Initiatives that address shared issues, such as the June 2011 conference on sustainable development and civil society, help underline the reliance of each community on the other and help increase the willingness to engage with each other. Efforts to increase this willingness have met with varying degrees of success, detailed further in the full case study. Participation in bicomunal events and projects has also served to increase people's awareness of the difficulties separation poses to their own community, and that they both face many of the same challenges.

#### *Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

NGO SC has forged the following formal relationships with groups outside the community:

- **CONCORD:** In addition to providing voice at a higher level for NGOs, CONCORD also links these NGOs to the 18 international networks and 24 national associations from the European member states represented through CONCORD.
- **The EU:** NGO SC maintains ties with the EU and has submitted a policy paper on security policy focussing on the Cypriot case. NGO SC is a member of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), which connects think tanks and NGOs.
- **The Anna Lindh Foundation:** membership of this foundation links NGO SC to a huge network of over 3,000 intercultural dialogue CSOs in the region. There are also opportunities for international networking, training, and participation in regional and thematic meetings and development of projects through the available grant schemes.
- **CIVICUS:** cooperation between NGO SC and CIVICUS has provided a structured approach to research, enabling NGO SC to expand its survey and report-writing skills.

The ENGAGE programme's small grants scheme creates opportunities for the future development of networking within and across the two communities. It also provides funding and support to organisations to hold events and organise activities as well as engage with organisations in the other community. This has contributed to raising the visibility of NGO SC within the areas covered by the grants, including co-organising events in more isolated communities. The centre's participation in CYINDEP and projects involving European partners also provide staff members with training opportunities in Europe they would not otherwise have, including study visits in Brussels. Support in kind has also been a strong feature of the centre's work; they help NGOs with few resources, including village development associations, to write grant proposals, find partners in the other community, and write and disseminate press releases.

Participation in ENGAGE enabled NGO SC to help organise and participate in major events, and address a policy-making audience, as outlined in the Case Study 1.



## Case Study 3: Akova Women's Association

### Introduction

The Akova Women's Association (AWA) was founded by women in the village of Akova<sup>5</sup> in the Turkish Cypriot community in 2001. Its aim was to address the concerns and needs of the villagers, especially women, who did not have equal access to resources for their personal development. AWA established a community centre under the bicomunal Development Programme, funded by USAID and United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS). The community centre has been a focus for raising awareness in the community and contributed to the empowerment of women in rural areas by increasing their access to resources and opportunities to become more actively involved in the community. It has since engaged with other NGOs to pursue its aims, including the Cyprus Turkish Civil Servants Trade Union (KTAMS), the Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women (KTÜKD), Association of Women to Support Living (KAYAD), the Mediation Association, Help those with Cancer Association (KHYP), and the Drug Alcohol Tobacco Prevention Association (USAM). It is a member of Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC) (see Case Study 5) which provides support to organisations in their communication needs with the wider public.

AWA organises training activities centred on building self-confidence and parenting courses, as well as hosting events to raise awareness about healthy eating, drug abuse, and domestic violence. The community centre has provided villagers with a computer suite, gym classes, and after school activities for children. As well as increasing information technology skills and the knowledge and fitness of the women concerned, and enhancing the development of children, these activities also promote the active involvement of women in the community, and in the wider society. Strong relationships have also been established between the association and women in surrounding villages, through attracting them to events organised by the association as well as providing them with support in the form of capacity building in relation to CSO development. AWA, therefore, also contributes to rural development in the Turkish Cypriot community, and through this aims to play a key role in the peace process. The rationale is that activities which empower women in rural areas are a starting point for them to develop more active involvement in the reconciliation process through becoming more informed about the concerns of their communities and how these might be addressed through reconciliation.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

Participants in AWA training and activities noted that participating women began to believe in themselves, and gained the skills and resources to further develop the work of AWA and the specific issues which they felt needed to be given priority in their community. Women also felt empowered to enter the job market or start their own businesses, and many reported that their family relationships had improved. AWA fosters teamwork and leadership skills, encourages active and committed involvement, and emphasises the importance of listening to others and understanding their needs. Participating in these activities fosters confidence and builds skills. Women involved with AWA reported feeling newly capable of contributing positively to change in the community, including challenge some of the traditional social restrictions imposed by it. AWA has also provided members with the opportunity to develop their experience, knowledge and skills by attending MC-Med training (including capacity building training) and also through study visits to Turkey.

AWA uses consultation with its target audience (local women) to ensure a good fit between the needs and expectations of the community, and AWA outputs. Women identify important issues, and design activities to address these. This includes using participatory research techniques in line

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<sup>5</sup> Akova (or Gypsou) has an approximate population of 650 and was a Greek Cypriot village up until 1974. Since then the displaced population has been replaced mainly by displaced Turkish Cypriots from the Larnaka area.

with effective community development practice, ensuring that the community has a sense of ownership in initiatives that arise as a result. For instance, the organisation conducted research in 2010 on barriers facing Akova women in entering the labour market. The findings from this research have informed a plan to provide training to increase women's employment opportunities.

Many of the women involved are unlikely to have other avenues to engage with civil society, because of where they live and their social status. AWA is therefore able to garner participation from two underrepresented sections of the population – women and those from rural areas – in civil society activity. Through its deep roots in and closeness to the local community, and by providing useful seminars and facilities, AWA supports women in their everyday lives, and this helps build the organisation's credibility at home as well as in surrounding communities.

#### *Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and sense of interdependence*

Since the opening of checkpoints across the Green Line in 2003, AWA has organised trips to the southern part of the island for women. Though irregular and infrequent, these trips provide first-hand learning about the Greek Cypriot community. AWA also seeks to inform rural women about peace-related issues and reconciliation, in part through making their own, informed decisions (rather than following traditional, male leads) on these issues. It sees a clear link between an improved standard of living for their community, and the implications of separation for rural development. In this sense, AWA seeks to meet primary needs so that, additionally, women may take advantage of opportunities to look beyond these to broader, longer-term issues related to separation that make up the context of more primary concerns. This includes, for example, discussions of domestic violence situated in discussions of violence more generally, including past violence between communities.

#### *Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

AWA contacts outside their immediate community include:

- AWA's relationship with MC-Med: this provides networking and capacity-building training opportunities.
- Membership with the Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC): CCMC helps AWA with communicating its work to the wider public and the media. It has, for example, produced and made available on the web a video of interviews with AWA participants about their experiences. This enables AWA to reach out to young people and to women's organisations from the Greek Cypriot community in a way that Turkish Cypriot television or websites could not.
- Guest speakers: the AWA occasionally invites influential women as guest speakers, which allows AWA members to meet important women whom they otherwise would not.

AWA has received funding from various sources, but also raises funds from local private businesses, room rental, and the sale of products. Some donor funding has included organisational and managerial strengthening, to improve the sustainability of the association.

AWA has been involved in local policy debates, such as one surrounding pre-school education, and wider policy issues. It currently lobbies for improved legislation surrounding domestic violence, and campaigns for the inclusion of this and related issues, like substance abuse, in the syllabus for training teachers, police officers, nursing staff, social workers, and other key stakeholders. AWA has also gained the attention of authorities, and thus space on the policy agenda, with its larger mass-participation events, such as a series of concerts raising awareness of traffic accidents. Noting their successes, other villages have followed suit with similar events.

## Case Study 4: Association for Historical Dialogue and Research

### Introduction

History is an important subject in most countries' national curriculum, but its significance is more profound in countries where ethnic tension prevails, given that history, as taught at school, is a key component of fostering a national identity and a sense of belonging to a particular community. It is also through studying history that young people come to understand the past which in turn helps them to make sense of their present situation. Teaching different nationalistic versions of history becomes problematic when opposing versions of history are being taught to different communities or ethnic groups, in the same country. This has happened in Cyprus, where children from the two main communities, even before 1974, attended separate schools and were taught alternative versions of history – versions that often denigrated the role of the other community in historical events. This has, at times, encouraged students to view the other community as the enemy.<sup>6</sup> The work of the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) is considered within this context.

AHDR was established in 2003 by Greek and Turkish Cypriots interested in the teaching and learning of history. It aims to promote critical thinking and a better understanding and application of history, which are perceived as vital components for a healthy democracy in Cyprus. The Association conducts comparative studies of the teaching of history in the schools of the two communities, develops an archive with historical sources and relevant bibliography which is available to interested researchers, organises conferences and seminars, and conducts qualitative and quantitative research on a variety of issues including the relations between the two communities in villages that were mixed prior to division.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

AHDR increases teachers' capacity and skills to teach history through conducting research and subsequently developing relevant teaching resources as additional sources of information. It also provides them with opportunities to attend conferences, seminars and trainings, enriching their knowledge, updating their skills and raising their awareness with current thinking in history teaching and the need to look at history textbooks and the teaching of history in schools with a critical eye. AHDR has also provided researchers and teachers, especially Turkish Cypriot teachers, with opportunities to attend and participate in international conferences and seminars – opportunities that would not otherwise be accessible to them. This allows them to learn about other conflict situations and how that learning might be applied to Cyprus.

Furthermore, the AHDR has managed to bring together primary and secondary education teachers who do not normally have common events or seminars. AHDR also maintains ties with teachers' unions in both communities and cooperates with other CSOs operating in Cyprus (e.g. PRIO, POST Research Institute, CCMC, and the International Centre for Transitional Justice), as well as with European and other international institutions. Cooperation includes attending each other's events, organising joint events such as walking tours in Nicosia, implementing projects together such as the Critical History Archive with PRIO, and collaborating on the production of teaching materials, some of which are based on their research projects.

Being represented by both communities in its membership and board increases the acceptance of AHDR on both sides, although this may also lead to less acceptance from some quarters within both communities. In general, AHDR resources are shared with interested parties in both communities.

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<sup>6</sup> Beyidoglu et.al (2010) 'Re-writing History Textbooks: History Education: A tool for Polarisation or Reconciliation?', Nicosia: POST Research Institute.

Within the context of seeking to promote a questioning and reflective approach to issues of history, as well as multi-perspectivity, AHDR was also involved in the production of two high quality television advertisements whose titles are indicative of their purpose: 'Different Perspectives' and 'Says Who?'. These were broadcast in both communities and are available on the AHDR website.

*Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

AHDR has established a platform for history teachers and others from the two communities where they can get to know each other through AHDR events as well as discuss the teaching of history in a way that promotes an analytical form of thinking that encourages a questioning approach to society. AHDR is a wholly bicomunal endeavour with Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots working in the same office. This is important in that it provides an opportunity for close engagement to take place over time, an opportunity not available to many other professionals in Cyprus. The new Home for Cooperation (H4C) will enable them to establish a more permanent presence in the neutral buffer zone.

Oral history produced by the association has illustrated the differing interpretations of bicomunal relations, even in what had been mixed villages. However, most peoples' interpretation of past events is heavily influenced by the official version. The interpretations of living reality as described by the inhabitants of mixed villages highlight the challenges in presenting history in a way that transcends traditional and official ideological versions of events without ignoring controversial events. To this end, AHDR recently organised a conference on how to teach controversial issues which attracted around 150 people. They have also initiated discussions on how history is, and should be, taught. One way of transcending the teaching of history through traditional textbooks is through the oral history archive developed by AHDR in conjunction with POST Research Institute. Participation of the villagers themselves in the oral history project also helps create a sense of justice because people have the chance to share their experiences and feel included in the reconciliation process.

*Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

AHDR has established ties with teachers' unions in both communities, although the Greek Cypriot teachers' unions have shown more reluctance at endorsing the objective of peaceful coexistence set out in Ministerial plans and circulars. Connections with teachers' unions, particularly Turkish Cypriot ones, have proved to be beneficial in increasing the credibility of AHDR's work, which in turn increases participation in its activities. AHDR also has board members who hold key positions in public institutions, which also helps them to address bureaucratic issues that arise. The association enjoys good relationships with a number of journalists, particularly with the *Politis* and *Alitheia* newspapers; one of their board members has a weekly column while others have had articles published. Significantly, the political leaders of the two main communities attended the widely-covered opening of the H4C in May 2011.

Funding has been received for various projects from the European Economic Area (EEA), various national embassies, UNDP-ACT/USAID, EC, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Ikme Bilban, the Fulbright Commission, and the Council of Europe, in addition to domestic organisations and individuals. Generally, AHDR has achieved a high level of visibility through membership of the European Association of History Educators and cooperation with various European and UN bodies.

AHDR has produced a policy proposal that has been disseminated to educational authorities, departments, and their partners. However, they have indicated that progress is slow and difficult. AHDR was instrumental, through its members in the Turkish Cypriot community, in influencing the revision of textbooks used in Turkish Cypriot schools. This revision, which took place under the previous administration, resulted in new history textbooks that were far removed from the ethnocentric approaches used in the old textbooks that had been in use since 1971. They also emphasised the importance of social history and normalised the portrayal of Greek Cypriots, who had previously been demonised. Unfortunately, the revised books became an election issue in the Turkish Cypriot community in 2009 and were replaced with new, more nationalistic, ones by the current administration after their election win.

## Case Study 5: Cyprus Community Media Centre

### Introduction

The Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC) is a UNDP-ACT-funded initiative which aims to encourage community-led communications and media in Cyprus and to support local CSOs to effectively communicate their work and their message to the mass media and the wider public. CCMC seeks to empower civil society to become more media literate and active.

CCMC opened in late 2009. It is located in the buffer zone and it has a core of six staff members with backgrounds in media, journalism and community based initiatives. It also has a larger pool of experts from which it draws to provide training or services to member organisations. These include film makers, photographers, sound engineers, graphic designers and journalists. The centre has a growing base of local member organisations, currently around 30. Elected representatives from these organisations form a management committee which meets monthly and provides the CCMC core team with guidance and support. This is also a forum where emerging concerns and issues are addressed.

Importantly, member organisations can use these services and the team's expertise free of charge. This is particularly important in a context where many organisations are small and run almost wholly on a volunteer basis, with limited or non-existent budgets. Its location in the buffer zone has practical advantages, including being easy to reach from either side for meetings and events. It also has symbolic advantages as a neutral space, which helps to ease feelings of uneasiness created from crossing checkpoints or going to the other side of the Green Line.

Another UNDP-funded project called Collaborative Media Initiative (CMI) is being implemented by CCMC. This one-year project aims to establish contact between media stakeholders in the two communities, as well as increase opportunities for collaboration between them.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

The free training CCMC provides to small CSOs has helped these organisations refine their messages and presentation skills, and confidence in using these to deal with the media and engage with other organisations and the public. The two most frequently requested services at CCMC are the making of short videos and tailored training. These services build organisational capacity as well as enable organisations to expand their reach.

The outreach and presentation capacity fostered by CCMC in turn promotes greater participation in the events and activities they organise. CCMC also enhances awareness and participation by promoting organisations and their events through its online event calendar and through videos on their website. Similarly, effective relationships with the mainstream media help inform people and other organisations about civil society activity. CCMC has indeed forged links with media stakeholders, particularly through the CMI initiative which has helped raise civil society, and media issues, through interviews, meetings, and the conference with media stakeholders it organised as part of its work. However, including locations and groups outside Nicosia proved to be more problematic, due to distance and time constraints. To address this CCMC launched a mobile initiative in 2011, which takes a workshop series around the island.

Through the information it disseminates on CSOs and their activities, CCMC contributes to the transparency and openness of these CSOs, and to their ability to present themselves clearly and positively to the public. This builds public confidence and trust in CSOs as well as adding to the credibility of CCMC and its staff.



### *Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

Community media has been recognised as playing an important role in promoting diversity through grassroots-based forms of media expression across Europe.<sup>7</sup> CCMC provides an opportunity to contribute to this underdeveloped aspect of civil society in Cyprus and through this increase the potential for promoting trust through enhancing communication and mutual understanding.

Being located in the buffer zone provides a shared, neutral space where both communities can come together, and the buffer zone, since the opening of the checkpoints, is also becoming a hub for bicomunal activity more generally. CCMC also attracts new faces to civil society activity given its easy accessibility, affordability, and the subject matter – media skills and technology are likely to attract young people in particular and it is the younger generation that needs to be the focus for building future trust and reconciliation.

The impact of bicomunal programmes on the general public may seem small in Cyprus, but their value for participants is great. This high value for should be considered in the wider context of what might be achieved should a basis for a political solution be agreed. The increased contact around, and focus on, common issues fostered by CCMC and others increases mutual understanding and respect between communities. Communication and dissemination of information is vital to this process, and CCMC provides a non-partisan vehicle for this as well as building the skills of others to participate more effectively in it.

### *Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

CCMC has links to a number of external agencies, including the UNDP, though the bulk of its work has focused on helping CSOs publicise their messages. This enables CSOs to raise public awareness of their goals and achievements, and this increased visibility can help attract funding. One significant gap in civil society's role in the social development of Cypriot society is the limited media space given to local groups to express their concerns and interests. To help address this, CCMC has several formal agreements with mainstream media which will strengthen civil society's visibility in both communities. This includes an agreement with Turkish Cypriot channels to broadcast ten programmes on CSOs who will be invited to discuss and promote their work. CSO representatives are also participants on a *Radio Mayis* radio show that CCMC staff hold on a regular basis.

The CMI coordinator has also fostered another key development in creating linkages: the launch of *Anahtar Media*, a joint venture between *Radio Astra* (Greek Cypriot community) and *Radio Mayis* (Turkish Cypriot community), with CCMC as the third partner. The two stations produced the first joint, live, simultaneous, on-location broadcast from H4C in June 2011, to mark the close of a two-day conference organised by CMI. This demonstrates that media collaboration across the two communities under the current circumstances is possible and it is hoped that it will prove to be an inspiration to media professionals across the island.

While it is a huge step from informing public opinion to influencing public policy, it should be noted that community media has developed in many states across Europe. This has proved to be effective in developing a stronger sense of social cohesion and promoting social inclusion through contributing to participatory forms of governance and democracy. This has included enabling CSOs to play a more active role in informing public consultation processes and enabling public representatives to make more informed decisions about key policy issues.

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<sup>7</sup> UNDP (2011) 'Fast facts: UNDP-ACT in Cyprus, CCMC', available at [www.undp-act.org/data/fast\\_facts\\_ccmc.pdf](http://www.undp-act.org/data/fast_facts_ccmc.pdf) (retrieved 30 August 2011).

## Case Study 6: Kontea Cultural Heritage Circle Project

### Introduction

Kontea is a village situated in the Mesaoria plain. Following the 1974 war, the Greek Cypriot inhabitants were displaced to the south and Turkish Cypriot inhabitants of villages in the district of Limassol relocated to the village. A small number of people from the Adana province of Turkey also settled there in 1976. After 1975, Kontea was renamed Türkmenköy, although Kontea is still commonly used by Turkish Cypriots. Kontea was a Greek Cypriot village, though the neighbouring villages were principally Turkish Cypriot or mixed. Former residents make reference to the villages' particular circumstances, claiming a history of good relations between Greek Cypriots in Kontea and Turkish Cypriots in surrounding villages. This history of good relations is often credited by former residents to both their, and Turkish Cypriots', willingness to engage in bicommunal actions.

The initial stimulus for the project came from former residents, returning after 2003, concerned about the state of decay of the village church. After discussions, they decided to apply for UN funding to restore it, and further deliberation broadened the proposal to include the preservation of the cultural heritage of the village. Prior to applying to the UNDP in 2006, former residents formed a non-profit NGO, the Kontea Heritage Foundation, and began searching for a Turkish Cypriot partner. Finally, they partnered with the Turkish Cypriot Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects (KTMMOB) and received a grant from the UNDP-ACT.

The project includes the renovation and preservation of the Greek Orthodox church and cloisters, a Catholic chapel and other buildings and historical remnants. A carob tree plantation, planted in 1965-66, has also been developed into the Carob Tree Peace Park, a space for outdoor activities. The Cultural Heritage project is a bicommunal initiative which adopts a participatory approach. This includes a decision-making mechanism involving the participation of both communities. It is also based on cooperation between both experts and former and current residents, and allows the latter to take ownership of the process and have a say in the project's development. Equally important to the tangible outputs of the project, the restored sites, are its intangible outcomes – the personal ties created between members of the two communities as well as an increased understanding of each other's culture and perspectives.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

Current residents are included in the project through discussions with team members, which enabled them to see that their involvement could contribute to change and improving their community. This inclusion promoted a sense of ownership and showed them that, as community members, their opinions were valued. It has shown former inhabitants that interaction with Turkish Cypriots and joint work towards common goals is possible and the process of engagement has given them the confidence to continue their work. Tangible benefits include the relative ease of visiting Kontea, and the fact that they feel safe there and can enjoy their cultural heritage. Some former inhabitants had trouble coming to terms with their homes being inhabited by others, or not being able to visit them. Nevertheless, their involvement in the project has helped them deal positively with feelings of bitterness and frustration.

Skills gained by support team participants include the ability to approach those who do not share their views to encourage dialogue, and the chance to practice second language skills. Additionally, despite the initial difficulties of finding a Turkish Cypriot partner and preparing the funding application, former residents were able to acquire the skills and knowledge to apply successfully. The project also provides a platform to develop leadership skills as former residents confront challenges and lead change. Their experiences have also enabled them to share their experience and knowledge with other groups interested in similar projects.

The current residents were consulted from the project's early stages by attending village discussions. Their early inclusion resulted in increased participation in activities, including in events organised by the project. Some families remain sceptical, and are waiting to see what happens before getting more openly involved. The project is therefore an opportunity to present the benefits of bicomunal approaches to trust building and preserving cultural heritage to a significant section of the population and, through this, increase the potential for their participation in community activity. In addition to formal cooperation, the learning generated was being transferred to other intra-communal developmental issues and challenges.

The participatory nature of the project also helped increase trust in both experts and the project more generally. The project presents an uncommon opportunity, and a reason, for rural populations to participate in bicomunal activity, and its mutual and non-threatening outcomes have broadened inclusion even to those with reservations about bicomunal action.

*Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

The project initiated contact and dialogue between the former and current residents of Kontea which would not have otherwise happened. The local residents in the Turkish Cypriot village steering committee acted as a bridge between the current residents and Turkish Cypriot core team and former residents. This established dialogue amongst the villagers which enabled the current residents to communicate their concerns to the core team. Additional events organised by the project leader created opportunities for people from the two communities to get to know each other, and the progress of the project has alleviated some concerns of more hesitant residents.

This project has carved out new spaces and new infrastructure for bicomunal engagement in this community, as all stakeholders were included and able to work together toward common goals. Friendships and contacts outside the project structure have also grown, and the project has brought together people who would not otherwise be engaged with each other, such as displaced persons and those from disparate political views. Preservation of the village provides a common concern, for which each community relies on the other.

Some of the people who participated in events organised by the project were previously against bicomunal interaction. However, their interest in the project, and experience of meeting with members of the other community, changed their perceptions and willingness to participate in bicomunal events. The project has also provided an alternative source of information about the other community, without the negative and prejudicial views sometimes expressed by politicians and in the media. Trust, built over time around a common vision for a common benefit, allows participants from both sides to see this as a small step toward some wider solution to the Cyprus problem.

*Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

Gaining support for the project and negotiating bureaucratic barriers required both communities to use contacts with influential people and agencies. Similar outreach and links to important bodies and groups (e.g. the church, and various governmental bodies) helped prevent misinformation or negative reactions. Contact with UNDP-ACT brought international funding to the current residents, and the UNDP are now keen to showcase this project as an example of good practice.

Additional resource generation is planned through building on the project. This includes the development of tourism for local businesses, as well as ongoing maintenance and use of restored buildings and sites. While the project is unlikely to influence current policy in either part of the island at this time, it has been receiving considerable attention from international bodies – particularly the UNDP. It has also demonstrated to local authorities in the Turkish Cypriot community that such projects, when supported by local people, can bring social and economic benefits without compromising political or ideological positions on the Cyprus problem. Moreover, the project is an example of what the two main communities can achieve together through a policy of peaceful co-existence – which the authorities in both communities of the island espouse.

## Case Study 7: Youth Organisations – HASDER and Soma Akriton

### Introduction

Previous research<sup>8</sup> has shown that young people in Cyprus are much less likely than older generations to have had exposure to the other community (31.4% compared to 12%), much less likely to have crossed the Green Line (30.6% compared to 19%), and more likely to have a negative disposition towards the other community (38% compared to 28.6%). Yet if there is to be a bicomunal political settlement, it is crucial that young people are prepared to contribute constructively. This case study focuses on the contribution of two CSOs – one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot – to involving young people in this process and building trust and reconciliation between the two main communities.

Soma Akriton is a Greek Cypriot youth organisation which has been established and managed by young people since 1998. It aims to engage youth in practical, creative and enjoyable activities, to increase their awareness of important social and environmental issues, and encourage them to be active citizens and contribute constructively to society. It organises a range of activities around issues such as peace, racism, the environment and safety. Based in Nicosia, Soma Akriton has 200 active members, and a sister group in Pafos. They have been actively involved in peacebuilding since 2002.

HASDER Folk Arts Foundation is the first folklore organisation established by Turkish Cypriots in 1977, and became a foundation in 2001. It is one of the most popular folk art organisations with members of all age groups such as children, young adults and seniors. The aim of the foundation is to protect and promote Cypriot folklore. It has a youth and a children's club which provide space and activities for young people as well as a Folk Arts Institute, and a traditional handicrafts workshop where people can undertake practical courses. HASDER is a member of the Turkish Cypriot NGO Network, initiated by MC-Med. It participates in and supports activities organised by the network including lobbying the leaders of the two main communities to reach an agreement on the Cyprus problem.

Both organisations are members of the UNDP-funded Cyprus Network for Youth Development and through this they cooperate with another ten youth-related organisations from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot community. HASDER and Soma Akriton also organise and/or participate in mono-communal and multi-communal events and summer camps, as well as workshops that are concerned both with the youth development in their own community and with increasing awareness and trust between young people across Cyprus.

### Findings

#### *Bonding: building capacity, participation, connectedness, and trust within community*

Both organisations have been increasing their members' confidence and skills in different ways. Soma Akriton prepare young people gradually through engaging them in short, less committed bicomunal activities before they are ready to attend more intensive activities such as educational trips abroad. Similarly, HASDER's youth club members who have little professional work experience and no specialist skills expressed a sense of developing their usefulness or empowerment through their participation in the youth club. As well as this, youth club members who are young professionals were able to contribute to the organisation by bringing in their skills and knowledge.

Those involved in leadership roles in both organisations have recognised the need to increase the youths' capacity to engage with the other community as a pre-condition for more effective engagement. Helping their members acquire new knowledge and skills is fundamental for Soma

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<sup>8</sup> Sitas, A., D. Latif, and N. Loizou (2007) Prospects of Reconciliation, Co-Existence and Forgiveness in Cyprus in the Post-Referendum Period, PRIO Report 4/2007. (available at [www.prio.no/files/manual-import/cyprus/1740\\_Report\\_4\\_07.pdf](http://www.prio.no/files/manual-import/cyprus/1740_Report_4_07.pdf), retrieved 30 August 2011)

Akriton and HASDER, and this is achieved through supporting and encouraging young members to research, think critically, and try new experiences. Soma Akriton also requires older participants to pass on their knowledge and skills to the younger ones, by having each age group assist the one immediately younger during their Saturday meetings. HASDER's youth club also plays an important role in the personal development of young people and contributes to shaping their beliefs and values, as well as their social circle. The youth club, through activities and projects, provides interactive learning opportunities outside the formal education system.

Both groups actively encourage youth to be involved with issues important to them and their communities. For instance, the Soma Akriton leadership has supported and encouraged young members' engagement and persistence, in gaining media coverage for their activities, and HASDER plans regular activities corresponding to current local and global issues. Soma Akriton liaise with other organisations and groups, from the media and the UNDP to other community groups, to promote their activities and learn from others' expertise. HASDER achieves connectedness mainly through organising events in the community, which aim to attract interest from mainstream media in order to communicate their message to wider audiences; these events also provide other CSOs with a platform to promote their work. Both groups are based in Nicosia, however due to its size and organisational development HASDER holds regular events reaching beyond the city.

Both organisations have had to gain trust, particularly of parents, over time; parents now see the organisations as a safe place for their children and safe mediators of bicomunal activity. Awareness campaigns, sharing experiences, showcasing the youths' work, and press releases have helped share information and resources with the community.

#### *Bridging: promoting engagement between communities and a sense of interdependence*

There has been long-term cooperation between Soma Akriton and HASDER, beginning with socialising opportunities such as weekend camping activities, varying in intensity with the political climate over the years. A variety of fun, joint activities and events provide an environment of dialogue and friendship for youth. Both organisations also have access to additional opportunities for youth members through their membership in the Cyprus Network for Youth Development. Dealing with parents' fears for the safety of children at these events, and potential ridicule or criticism from peers for engaging with the other community, are ongoing challenges that these youth organisations face.

#### *Linking: contacts, resources, and policy influence*

Relations between CSOs in general and those involved in developing public policy have not been particularly productive in influencing policy in recent years, partly due to the lack of recognition of the value of civil society. Civil society has tried to overcome this, strengthening their voice and influence through a number of initiatives and networks. HASDER has contributed to lobbying and more general campaigning initiatives around the needs of its members, as well as in relation to gaining recognition for the role and value of civil society generally.

Both Soma Akriton and HASDER maintain collaborative working relationships with the UNDP, through the Cyprus Network for Youth Development. Though the organisations in the network are not all youth-based, it offers opportunities for Soma Akriton and HASDER to develop contacts with more strategically placed organisations, and to identify useful partners for bicomunal activities.

The two organisations are also members of other networks within their communities. HASDER is represented on the Turkish Cypriot Cyprus NGO Network, and Soma Akriton is a member of the Cyprus Youth Council. Members of Soma Akriton and HASDER have participated in radio and television programmes either to talk about their experiences from their educational trips and bicomunal encounters or to respond to current affairs issues and concerns in their community.



## Discussion: making a difference

These case studies illustrate how CSOs contribute to the development of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in Cyprus, and through this build trust and reconciliation between the two main communities. These case studies provide in-depth insights into the internal and external factors that influence the success of civil society initiatives, as well as those that cause difficulties or present challenges. Furthermore, they identify key issues in addressing those challenges and improving practice.

### **Bonding: developing community assets and activity**

CSOs are contributing to the creation of more connected or integrated communities in Cyprus through developing an appropriate support infrastructure, including the initiation of, and support for networks, and strengthening civil society through providing capacity building programmes, increasing confidence, and promoting more active and informed communities. This has included working with sections of the community not previously involved in civil society activity, including hard-to-reach and marginalised sections of the population. They are increasing people's trust or confidence in CSOs, including through raising visibility, increasing efficiency, and promoting the role and value of civil society in addressing a range of issues. CSOs are also contributing to more connected communities through promoting joined-up approaches in working towards shared goals.

### **Bridging: promoting engagement between communities**

CSOs have been able to harness the skills and confidence gained through building the capacity of their respective communities to enhance the level of, and potential for, engagement between members of the two communities. This has included developing joint activities and dialogue, improving the quality of structures or processes for engagement, improving or increasing understanding of the inter-dependence between people from the two communities, and increasing the willingness of each community to engage with the other.

All of this is enhancing each community's awareness and competence to address or deal with issues of separation. The case studies highlight how the stakeholders involved were able to explore and adopt new ideas and approaches in order to promote engagement and build bridges between the two communities, as well as considering the needs of each community in the wider global context.

### **Linking: strengthening connections with those with influence and resources**

Relationships between civil society and those with power and influence within Cyprus (politicians, public agencies and policy makers) have generally been relatively weak. However, relations with international funding bodies, such as the European Commission (EC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have been much more developed. Such contacts can enhance the confidence of local power brokers and public agencies in Cypriot CSOs, while also influencing policy development in terms of the application of European (and other) standards in relation to citizen involvement, participatory democracy, and social inclusion.

These relationships, together with other related fundraising activities, have enabled CSOs to generate additional resources for both communities for peacebuilding and related work. CSOs have also provided a voice for those involved in peacebuilding work through establishing and improving linkages with the media.

## Discussion: challenges

Our research has also identified a number of challenges that CSOs face. These challenges may be grouped as relating to internal issues, external relations, and political constraints.

### Internal issues

#### *Sustainability and continuity*

Three crucial issues which affect the capacity of CSOs in Cyprus are sustainability and funding; staffing; and maintaining networks. First, a key challenge is diversifying funding sources. Funding is complicated by legislation that currently allows tax benefits only for donations to registered charities, which exempts many CSOs. The revised legislation in the Greek Cypriot community, which is negotiated with CSOs, will hopefully remedy that by allowing for the registration of public benefit organisations which would be eligible for such donations. EU membership has presented additional opportunities for funding, including through participation in international platforms. Second, although the 2011 CIVICUS report<sup>9</sup> shows positive developments since 2005, the sector still lacks job security and attractive benefits; short-term project funding exacerbates the problem. This results in a relatively high turnover of civil society professionals, as they may seek more secure opportunities in the public or private sectors, causing the sector to lose invaluable experience and expertise. While staff changes may boost a team's expertise and motivation, frequent staff turnover can also undermine team spirit. However, larger support organisations have been able to sustain a level of continuity by maintaining a core of staff members for a number of years and retaining others on a consultancy basis. Third, although a key variable for working effectively is maintaining networks, CSOs have difficulty keeping networks functioning, largely due to a lack of time and staff. Initiatives such as ENGAGE help address this challenge by providing resources that enable CSOs and funding agencies to dedicate appropriate staff time to networks.

#### *Monitoring and evaluation*

This is a more general point that emerges from across research in Cyprus. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are not always formally integrated into project proposals, especially when a specific evaluation budget is absent. However, sometimes external evaluation has been incorporated into initial project proposals, as with ENGAGE. When evaluations focus particularly on process and impact, they can provide invaluable learning. This approach could also be developed to capture outcomes - including relevant trust and peacebuilding outcomes.

### External relations

#### *Engaging within and across communities*

As they seek to engage within and across communities, CSOs face challenges with widening participation in civil society, addressing language issues, overcoming significant distrust within Cypriot society, and working with the media to raise the profile of civil society action.

Widening participation in civil society events is a key challenge, especially for bicomunal events in the absence of an imminent political solution. Many civil society members are volunteers and taking part in training and networking activities beyond those of one's own CSO means additional strain on their time and energy. Support organisations are trying to address this by identifying needs and tailoring events to meet specific constraints facing other CSOs. Keeping training sessions short and specific, and emphasising practical applications of new knowledge and skills can also help.

A second challenge is that of language. In the general absence of bilingualism (Greek and Turkish), bicomunal events have long been conducted in English. This excludes sections of the population who speak little or no English, leading to such events being perceived as exclusive and elitist. Although expensive, simultaneous translation should be integrated into project proposals.

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<sup>9</sup> CIVICUS (2011) 'Civil Society Index Report for Cyprus: A Map for the Future-2011', Nicosia: MC-Med and NGO-SC

There has traditionally been little trust within Cypriot society and organisations have been working hard to overcome this distrust, adopting a more open and transparent approach to their work, developing professionalism, improving efficiency, and engaging more effectively with the public. The Working with Young People case study constitutes one example of how two organisations cultivate good relations with parents to gain their trust as an essential pre-condition for engaging effectively with youth and engaging them in bicommunal activities.

Finally, CSOs have recently made several successful attempts to address the deficit in media coverage of CSO activity in Cyprus. These include the establishment of CCMC and the Independent Media Centre, and collaboration with newspapers, radio, and television to ensure coverage of CSO activities. However, discussion panels on political and social issues in television programmes, for example, still only rarely include civil society professionals. A recent exception was the Cyprus 2015 population surveys on Cyprus problem, which attracted considerable media and public attention. The case studies have illustrated some of the ways in which support CSOs, including CCMC, have been helping others to acquire these skills and initiate appropriate relationships.

### *Working across the Green Line*

Developing new joint initiatives, such as CYINDEP, CCMC and ENGAGE, provides a unique and valuable insight into how arrangements for working bicommunally can be developed to transcend communal divisions. This may include parallel structures or processes being created in each community, to manage island-wide issues.

Attracting participants to activities organised in the other community is another challenge. This is particularly true when the event involves minors who are often only permitted to cross the Green Line with a parent or an adult as part of a group with parental consent. Such events require more planning time as they involve engaging with, and reassuring, parents as part of the process.

Another sensitive issue is venue selection in the Turkish Cypriot community. Any event that is held there on property with unclear or pre-1974 Greek Cypriot ownership would be a strong deterrent for many Greek Cypriot participants.

### **Political constraints**

The prevailing political culture and attitudes to civil society in Cyprus, particularly its section working on reconciliation, are not conducive to providing platforms for civil society or citizens in general in political processes, including the peace process. This indicates a serious gap in Cypriot society in terms of how citizens can play an effective role in the governance of their country, particularly by:

- influencing developments in public policy to better meet their needs
- applying international (including EC) standards on citizen participation
- providing a high-level role for civil society in peace negotiations.

This has often created problems such as suspicion and antagonism from public figures (including politicians) and sections of the population (including the left and right). Despite difficulties, CSOs have been steadily strengthening their lobbying potential, developing local networks and engaging with international bodies (including European institutions) in order to bring about change. Securing appropriate media coverage also helps CSOs strengthen their leverage. Training in advocacy and lobbying is very limited, however, and policy decisions tend to take place behind closed doors which makes the work of CSOs even more difficult.

## Key recommendations

The following are some key recommendations based on the learning emanating from our research and include ways of improving practice and addressing some of the challenges facing civil society organisations in Cyprus.

### Communications

- Shifting the focus in bi-communal events from being about meeting the other to the purpose of the event, and stressing why the event is important for participants.
- Cultivating relationships with journalists, providing interesting material that can be readily used.
- Seeking to be invited on TV and radio programmes with discussants from administrations, political parties or public agencies.
- Acknowledging that functioning in the post-agreement state will be difficult, but emphasising a will to work together to find solutions and ways forward.
- Promoting existing successful collaborations as models of good practice.

### Reaching a wider audience

- Organising mono-communal discussions for specific audiences to draw people interested in such topics who would not usually attend civil society events.
- Combining targeted events, appropriate venues, and including key stakeholders.
- Using television, radio, and newspapers to raise the visibility of civil society.
- Increasing participation of youth from one community to events taking place in the other by alleviating parents' potential concerns for safety by developing strong relationships of trust between CSOs and parents through continuous communication. This works best when the organisations involved are strongly rooted and have credibility in their own communities.
- Ensuring that ownership of venues is clearly stated to assure Greek Cypriots, in particular, that activities are not being held on Greek Cypriot land/property in the area outside of their control.

### Strategic development

- Developing initiatives of real common concern, which lead to tangible products or outcomes.
- Developing common working arrangements administered by Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot personnel.
- Investing in creating common spaces of interaction, which can foster daily or frequent contact.
- Adopting an approach within each community of cultivating acceptance and respect for diversity more generally, in conjunction with working to improve bicomunal relations.
- Investing in scientific and other research which is based on international best practice and remains free of political influence which can unite researchers from the two communities.
- Increasing initiatives outside of Nicosia and Limassol in partnership with local authorities and groups rooted in the local community in order to increase legitimacy and attract more people.

### Advocacy and lobbying

In keeping with internationally recognised standards of citizen participation, it is crucial that civil society is able to play a more active role in the development of public policy and the peace negotiations. Although we acknowledge obstacles such as competition for funding, differences in conflict resolution approaches, difficulties in communication across projects, and a restrictive political and legislative context, in order for civil society peace initiatives to have greater impact, it is necessary to:

- build capacity in advocacy and lobbying
- coordinate efforts, to ensure an integrated approach to peacebuilding
- highlight mutual benefits from a political solution
- cultivate relationships with actors at all levels, in addition to other CSOs
- develop a lobbying strategy to influence policy makers and politicians
- demonstrate to policy makers and those influencing policy that civil society has the experience and expertise to make constructive and valuable contributions to a range of issues.

## Further information

The following documents based on our research are available to download for free on the INTRAC website at [www.intrac.org](http://www.intrac.org):

- Full versions of the seven case studies summarised here (in English)
- A Briefing Paper which explains the rationale and methodology for the research and provides an overview of the main issues and findings (in Greek, Turkish and English)
- A Toolkit for civil society organisations which captures the lessons learnt and provides practical recommendations on the basis of our research (in Greek, Turkish and English)
- A Conference Report of the two-day event co-organised by INTRAC in Nicosia, Cyprus on 21-22 October 2011 (in English).

## Links to individual organisations and projects in Cyprus cited in this booklet

The Management Centre of the Mediterranean (MC-Med)	<a href="http://www.mc-med.eu">www.mc-med.eu</a>
Engage – Do your part for Peace project	<a href="http://www.engage4peace.org">www.engage4peace.org</a>
NGO Support Centre (NGO SC)	<a href="http://www.ngo-sc.org">www.ngo-sc.org</a>
Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)	<a href="http://www.ahdr.info">www.ahdr.info</a>
Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC)	<a href="http://www.cypruscommunitymedia.org">www.cypruscommunitymedia.org</a>
The Kontea Cultural Heritage Foundation	<a href="http://www.konteaheritage.com">www.konteaheritage.com</a>
Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects (KTMMOB)	<a href="http://www.ktmmob.org">www.ktmmob.org</a>
Soma Akriton	<a href="http://www.somaakriton.com.cy">www.somaakriton.com.cy</a>
HASDER Folk Arts Foundation	<a href="http://www.hasder.org">www.hasder.org</a>
Cyprus Network for Youth Development	<a href="http://www.multiculturalcyprus.org">www.multiculturalcyprus.org</a>

## International funders and foundations

UNDP-ACT	<a href="http://www.undp-act.org">www.undp-act.org</a>
European Commission: Representation in Cyprus	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/cyprus">http://ec.europa.eu/cyprus</a>
Anna Lindh Foundation	<a href="http://www.euromedalex.org">www.euromedalex.org</a>
European NGO confederation for Relief and Development	<a href="http://www.concordeurope.org">www.concordeurope.org</a>

## Other useful links

Cyprus CSO Directory	<a href="http://www.sto.medyamerkezi.org">www.sto.medyamerkezi.org</a> (in Turkish) <a href="http://www.ngosincyprus.org">www.ngosincyprus.org</a> (in Greek)
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