

## Supporting Syrian approaches to political accommodation May 2016

### Overview

Conflict Dynamics International is conducting an initiative **to support Syrian actors in developing options that can reconcile competing political interests and thereby help to chart a way forward for Syria.**

The types of options at the center of this initiative include ideas for shaping **political dialogue processes** as well as **future governance arrangements**. These options focus on accommodating, where possible, the competing political interests that are fueling the ongoing conflict.

### Context

Whatever the initial causes of the Syrian crisis, conflict dynamics have evolved due to new factors that must be considered in any attempt to stop the war, which include: the emergence of the Islamic State in Syria as a significant military force; the re-orientation of internal conflict toward fighting between non-State armed groups and Islamist groups as well as between these groups and the Government of Syria; and the deepening cleavages between different communities and ethnic groups as a result of the prolonged and intensely brutal nature of the conflict.

Further, there is a lack of common ground on political solutions between parties to the conflict and influential Syrian groups. In addition, there is a lack of dialogue on future governance arrangements, which has left a significant substantive vacuum in the political domain.

### Objectives

The purpose of this initiative is to support Syrians, as well as agreed international mediators, in exploring options for a viable political process and governance arrangements that can contribute to ending the violent conflict and foster national dialogue.

The specific project objectives are:

1. To facilitate a greater understanding of the **political interests and socio-cultural needs, as well as an actor map**, inside Syria by working with Syrian partner organizations;
2. To **support Syrian influencers and interest groups in developing options** for political dialogue process and governance arrangements consistent with the Syrian context;
3. To **facilitate dialogue within and between Syrian constituencies** on options for political accommodation.

The target audience for this initiative include: the Government of Syria and its supporting constituencies; political opposition groups; armed opposition groups; international facilitators/mediators; international/regional organizations; civil society constituencies; and supporting States.

This work is being fed into the mission of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria and other high-level dialogue channels, as well as other international actors.

## Methodology

Conflict Dynamics has developed a **structured approach for exploring options for political accommodation**, which includes:

Four Strands, or focal areas, that relate to **political dialogue processes**:

- Process design
- Participation
- Implementation modalities
- Confidence building measures

Six Strands, or focal areas, for organizing **governance arrangements**:

- Political structure
- Electoral system(s)
- Executive
- Legislative branch
- Public participation
- Traditional and customary arrangements

These Strands provide a structure for generating options and for assessing whether those options are capable of accommodating diverse interests.

Working with the political accommodation approach, this initiative guides Syrian constituencies through a 6-step methodology to develop options, which includes systematic analysis of political interests and contextual factors, as well as several rounds of consultation to assess and refine the options.

## Project activities and outputs

Activities to support this initiative include:

- (A) **Individual and small group consultations** to discuss political interests, contextual realities, and opportunities for dialogue;
- (B) **Policy-oriented research**, including comparative case study analysis, to provide technical ideas for building and refining options;
- (C) Facilitation of **workshops or seminars** on how to apply the frameworks and tools for political accommodation;
- (D) Support of **dialogue on options for process and governance** within and between Syrian groups, where possible.

This initiative involves working in a neutral and impartial manner with all key constituencies and parties to the conflict in Syria.

To carry out these activities, Conflict Dynamics maintains a regional presence and has partnered with Syrian and international organizations, which includes expert advisory support from Dr. David Lesch and Trinity University (USA).

### Contact information:

Gerard Mc Hugh, President

Phone: +1 617 306-3157

Email: [gmchugh@cdint.org](mailto:gmchugh@cdint.org)