

External Evaluation

Senior-Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing
Leadership



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Acronyms

AU	African Union
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GCSP	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
HSD	Human Security Division
IPAT	International Peacebuilding Advisory Team
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation
SLCP	Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEP	Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding
SML	Senior Mission Leader Course of the United Nations
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UN	United Nations
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNOG	United Nations Office in Geneva

1. Executive Summary

The Senior-Level Course on Peacebuilding aims to teach competences to senior experts of the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding. The course is run annually by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and its partners, Interpeace and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on behalf of the Human Security Division (HSD) of the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland (FDFA).

An external and independent evaluation was considered necessary to assess if the course was still effective and to identify where improvements could be made. This evaluation was expected to be the basis for dialogue between HSD and GCSP for a continued cooperation on the topic after the end of the funding phase in 2016.

The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach. The evaluation encompassed a range of quantitative and qualitative tools in order to triangulate evidence, test overarching programme assumptions, and assess impact.

The evaluation concludes that the past editions of the Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership (SLCP) have by and large met their objectives. The course and its modules were relevant to a great extent. The course was effective in meeting the learning objectives, albeit some adjustments could strengthen the effectiveness. The quality of the course depended on its resource personnel, unique methodology and the continuous interest of course organizers to constantly look for improvements. Feedback from participants were considered to improve the course; but evaluations could be better summarized in the course reports. The desired impact of the course matched the overall actual impact, but depended on the appropriate selection of participants. The right mixture of participants was a recurring challenge.

The evaluation further concludes that each partner had the potential to bring comparative advantages to the partnership. Due to a lack of transparency and efficiency, the partnership was unable to overcome a number of intrinsic challenges. The contracting agreement resulted in a two-level partnership to the dissatisfaction of one partner. The current contracting agreement allowed GCSP to train Swiss experts from the Pool together with international experts in a setting that was overall effective and relevant. The inclusion into the core budget seemed to have given GCSP the impression that the SLPC could now be a fully independent GCSP product. This result was however not the original intention since HSD wanted to be further consulted on financial and substantive matters. It would be interesting to compare this finding with the compliance of HSD agreements and recommendations for the Basic Course on Peacebuilding.

This evaluation recommends that the course should be further adapted to meet the future needs of the participants. A stronger linkage between peace(building) and leadership should be made, whereas the focus on collaborative leadership should be made more explicit. Speakers from the business world should adapt their expertise better to the peacebuilding context. The peer-to-peer methodology should be kept and investments should be made to sustain the quality of resource personnel.

The evaluation calls for urgent and constructive consultations between the course partners to build a strong and sustainable foundation for the future of the course. The partnership between GCSP and Interpeace would need to be clarified in terms of visibility, division of responsibilities and conceptual substance of the course. The partnership with UNITAR should be reconsidered. The relationship between HSD and GCSP should be improved by agreeing how far the SLCP course could be integrated into the overall GCSP course programme with full respect for the needs of HSD in terms of visibility, monitoring and relevance. A learning event on the basis of the outcomes of this evaluation should be organized timely to allow for the efficient and effective organization of the Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership 2017.

2. Introduction

Background

Every year, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs sends a considerable number of civilian and police experts to international organisations, including to the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in order to contribute to peacebuilding and work on human rights. The Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding (SEP), part of the Human Security Division (HSD), trains and prepares these experts for their deployment. In addition to the basic Peacebuilding Training Course, a Senior-Level course is annually organized by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and its partners, Interpeace and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

The Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership (SLCP) was developed following the need to train competences for current and potential leaders of the SEP. In 2008, the HSD decided to mandate the GCSP to conceive and possibly organize a course similar to the two-week Senior Mission Leader Course (SML). GCSP already organized the basic Peacebuilding Training Course. GCPS decided to convene a group of senior experts to analyse the request from the Human Security Division and decided that it would be more appropriate to add a specific competence to the SLCP, namely leadership. The Geneva Centre for Security Policy became the designated director and coordinator of the course. Two additional partners joined the course organisation, namely Interpeace and UNITAR. The first course took place in 2009, and since then has been run every year in November. In its current form, it lasts for five days with room for 24 participants, including a maximum of 5 Swiss nationals selected by the HSD.

Objective of the Course

The Senior-Level Course on Peacebuilding aims to train competences for senior experts of the Swiss Pool of Experts in Civilian Peacebuilding. This Course provides an opportunity for practitioners involved in peacebuilding policy-making and implementation to enhance their understanding of sustainable leadership in multidimensional post-conflict peacebuilding environments. The SLCP is an integrated course since it targets civilian, police and military experts.

Partnership

The Geneva Centre for Security Policy is an international foundation established in 1995, with 51 member states, with the primary purpose of promoting peace, security and international cooperation through executive education and training, applied policy analysis and dialogue.

Interpeace is an independent, international peacebuilding organization, initially established in 1994 by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace. Interpeace would like to enable people to build lasting peace, and the course is a part of their International Peacebuilding Advisory Team (IPAT).

UNITAR is an autonomous UN body established in 1963 and is a training arm of the United Nations System. UNITAR has the mandate to enhance the effectiveness of the UN through diplomatic training, and to increase the impact of national actions through public awareness-raising, education and the training of public policy officials.

3. Methodology

Objective of the Evaluation

The SLCP course has been running for eight years, and has evolved based on the feedback from participants and from the HSD. Since 2010, no considerable review has taken place. An external and independent evaluation was considered necessary to assess if the course is still effective enough and to identify where improvements can be made. The evaluation is expected to be the basis for dialogue between HSD and GCSP for a continued cooperation on the topic after the end of the funding phase in 2016.

The overall objectives of the evaluation were twofold:

1. *Accountability*: Was the Course effective and cost-efficient, in terms of content of the course, learning goals, and coordination between partners and in consultation with the HSD?
2. *Learning*: What might be the future needs of the participants in terms of the specific competency 'Leadership' and how can/should the different partners improve their own contribution?

Accountability and learning were to be assessed for both expected outcomes:

1. *Course Evaluation*: Assessment of the content of the course, from conception to delivery of the course itself and its evaluation up to the final reporting, including methodology and pedagogical tools used.
2. *Partnership Evaluation*: Assessment of areas for improvement with regards to organizational structure between partners and processes of collaboration, including with the HSD, in light of ensuring an efficient course and efficient fulfilment of GCSP's mandate.

Previous evaluation efforts

Two evaluation retreats have taken place in the eight years of the courses existence. The first was conducted on 30 March 2010 following the 2009 pilot course. HSD, GCSP and Interpeace participated. A second reflection was organized on 7 March 2012 and attended by all four partners.

Evaluation methodology¹

This evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach. The evaluation encompassed a range of quantitative and qualitative tools in order to triangulate evidence, test overarching programme assumptions, and assess impact. The main guarantor of the validity of the findings was the broad range of sources and methods used to assemble evidence.

The following research tools were used:

1. TOOL 1: Course Observation:
 - The evaluator attended the 8th Course, taking place from 14 to 18 November 2016, for the first three and half days.
2. TOOL 2: Desk Review
 - Review of course material from 2009 to 2016, of email exchanges, meetings minutes; evaluations and review of other relevant written material. (over 200 documents)

¹ The evaluation matrix can be found in Annex 1.

- Limitations: Individual written evaluation forms of the participants were not maintained by GCSP and thus did not allow a comparison of the evaluation summary with the actual feedback. Also, oral course debriefings at the end of the course were not recorded. Only the evaluation summary of the post-six months' summary of 2012 was retrieved from the course material. There were not many records of discussion between the partners.
3. TOOL 3: Interviews with organizers
- GCSP: Prof. Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, Deputy Director and Academic Dean; Dr. Carl Ungerer, Head of the Leadership, Crisis and Conflict Management Programme; Dr. Caty Clement, SPLC Course Director and Senior Programme Advisor and Senior Fellow, Leadership, Crisis and Conflict Management Programme; Ms. Carlotta Ferrero, Senior Programme Officer, Leadership, Crisis and Conflict Management Programme, Peacebuilding Cluster
 - Interpeace: Mr. Scott Weber, Director-General; Ms. Renee Lariviere, Deputy Director-General; Mr. Bernardo Avaro de Leon, SPLC Course Co-Director and Senior Peacebuilding Adviser at Interpeace's International Peacebuilding Advisory Team; Mr. Koenraad van Brabant, former SPLC Course Co-Director
 - Despite multiple contact attempts, it was not possible to talk to Mr. Evariste Karambizi of UNITAR
4. TOOL 4: Interviews with funding agency: Mr. Daniel Fasnacht; Head of Section Swiss Expertpool for Civilian Peacebuilding, Human Security Division, FDFA and Ms. Claudia Rizzo, Desk Training & Capacity Development, Human Security Division, FDFA
5. TOOL 5: Interviews with Resource personnel
- Mentors: Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, Mr. Robert Gordon, Ms. Janet Lim, Ms. Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu (mentor in 2015). A request to Dr. Oluwafunmilayo Olonisakin, mentor in 2014, remained unanswered.
 - Speakers: Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles, Ms. Simone-Eva Redrupp, Dr. John Antonakis, Dr. Daniel von Wittich
6. TOOL 6: Participants' survey
- A survey was sent to all former course participants, in total 171. (14 bounced)
 - 40 former participants filled out the survey and its results allowed to establish a sample profile of the course participants for this evaluation.
 - % of respondents per course year: 27,5 % in 2016, 27,5 % in 2015, 15% in 2014, 5% in 2013, 7,5% in 2012, 12,5% in 2011, 2,5% in 2010 and 2,5 in 2009.
 - % of respondents by gender: 60% male, 40% female
 - Follow-up emails with interested former participants.
 - Limitations: due to the developments in terms of methodology and content from 2009 to 2016, the answers of the survey respondents needed to be differentiated where necessary.
7. TOOL 7: Presentation and discussion of results
- A first draft of the report was presented to and discussed with HSD on 8th February in Bern.
 - The final draft will form the basis for further discussion between all partners at a learning event in March 2017 in Geneva.

4. Analysis and findings

4.1 Course Evaluation

Have the past editions of the SLCP courses met the objectives? And how can the course be adapted to future needs of participants?

4.1.1 Relevance

A crucial question to be answered in this context was, if the course itself was relevant. In other words, **was/is there a place for such a course?** The evaluation confirmed that indeed a course to enhance leadership for peacebuilding was needed. There was a gap in the learning landscape for leadership in the peace sector. This contrasted with an urgent need to better train leaders working in this sector. Courses in leadership existed in the business world. For international organisations, courses were either focused on leadership, mainly with a management focus, or on peacebuilding. The SLCP thus filled a niche by combining these topics.

One course was often quoted as a reference for the SLCP. Back in 2008, HSD looked at the two-week Senior Mission Leader Course (SML) of the United Nations as a benchmark for the course. This course remained quite similar in concept, but differed from the SLCP in several aspects. First, it was judged more effective for the SEP course to have a focus on the competence of leadership. The SML aimed to give a better understanding of the complexity of peacekeeping operations. Second, the target audience was different. The SML attracted senior UN Staff (SRSGs, DSRSGs, Force Commanders and Police Commissioners nominated by their countries), whereas the SLCP was broader in terms of background and seniority. Third, the SML lasted two weeks and the SLCP four days. A final difference was the unique methodology of the SLCP to which we refer to in 4.1.2. A second course referred to was the leadership course organized by the UN System Staff College in Turin, which relied on the same speakers of the University of Lausanne, but seemed to focus more on management aspects rather than collaborative leadership.

Are the course contents and the different modules relevant to the overall objective of the training?

The SLCP underwent several changes since it was first organized in 2009. These changes were made to the duration of the course, the learning objectives, the methodology and the understanding of the two core course topics, namely peacebuilding and leadership. Several interviewees confirmed that the course development had required considerable attention and time. After about three sessions, the course was deemed to meet the requirements. The development of the course was based on extensive discussions with resource personnel, partners and external experts.

The **overall objective** of the 2016 training was to “*provide an opportunity for current and potential leaders to enhance their understanding of sustainable peacebuilding and leadership style.*” In 2009 the objective was still “*to provide high-level peacebuilding training for policy posts to increase efficiency in the field and/or to prepare for deployments.*”

In parallel, the **learning objectives** were reduced over the years which allowed for a better focus and for more targeted course outcomes. Too many learning goals, six in 2009, proved to be unrealistic. The overall learning goals for the 2016 course were:

1. To enhance a comprehensive understanding of the latest insights in sustainable peacebuilding
2. To create an environment in which participants can share and take stock of lessons learned
3. To explore leadership styles and skills that effectively deal with peacebuilding challenges

The second and third learning goals were the most important, whereas the first learning goal served to set the context. Yet, the second learning goal did not specify which lessons learned the participants were expected to share and to take stock of. A specification on lessons learned for peacebuilding challenges would make the goal clearer. The learning objectives did not specifically use the terminology to enhance the competence of leadership', as was stated as primary aim. The learning goals were not written in a SMART² manner.

The course was divided into five modules.

- Module 1: Leadership for Peace (learning goal 2 and 3)
- Module 2: Reinventing Peacebuilding (learning goal 1 and 2)
- Module 3: Collaborative Challenges for Peacebuilding (learning goal 2 and 3)
- Module 4: Leadership for Peacebuilding (learning goal 2 and 3)
- Module 5: Implementing Leadership for Peacebuilding (learning goal 2 and 3)

Former participants were asked in the online survey to rate the relevance of the course to their work. (weighted average of 4.12 on a scale of 5)³ A clear majority scored the course relevance very high, in comparison to their work.

The SLCP is currently entitled "Enhancing Leadership for Peacebuilding". As stated above, the SLCP was relevant and unique because it offered a learning opportunity in these two broad concepts within one course. An appropriate understanding of these concepts, tailored to the target audience, was thus key. The evaluation identified several considerations on the notion of these concepts.

The first question was whether the course should focus on peacebuilding as such, or on peace in general. The concept of "peacebuilding" was not explicitly defined in the course. Participants were expected to come to the course with the proper interpretation. Resource personnel stated that a comprehensive introduction into the topic was challenging for three reasons. First, the term "peacebuilding" has evolved over the last few years and was expected to continue doing so, for example in light of the Sustainable Development Goals. Second, the topic was very large. Third, the course partners themselves have different interpretations of the concept. Was peacebuilding top-down or bottom-up, driven by large players or by local actors?

Consequently, the absence of a definition of the topic led to confusion about the course objective and could possibly influence the expectations of participants and the relevance of the course. One former participant for example came to the course with the expectation that he would be educated in the structure of a peace process, and expected to be made familiar with the peace model. Peacekeepers could feel discouraged to attend the course. A suggestion made both in the interviews and in participants' feedback was to name the course "Enhancing Leadership for Peace" or "Enhancing Leadership for Sustainable Peace." This would give more room for the stated purpose of the course 'to navigate through complexity without simplifying reality', as stated by one of the interviewees.

Peacebuilding was broadly presented from the understanding of the UN. The UN focus was understandable given its primary role in peacebuilding and the fact that the course was organized in Geneva. Other security actors, including the OSCE and the EU, as well as local actors, received less focus. Participants from other organisations had difficulties in relating the course discussions on peacebuilding with their own experience and interests. A UN focus also contrasted with the reality that regional security actors played an equally important role in current crises such as in Ukraine and the refugee crisis. Through the SEP, Switzerland equally deployed experts to these organizations.

² SMART is a term in project management that stands for S = specific, M = measurable, A= assignable, R = realistic, T = Time-related.

³ Annex 2 contains the full results of the online survey sent to former participants.

The second key concept was **leadership**. The term appeared to be complex. Since 2009, a debate existed on the type of leadership the course should focus on. The evaluation identified different opinions from resource personnel on the concept of leadership in peacebuilding. The main dichotomy seemed to be between leadership in terms of the leader as person (hierarchical and top-down function), or leadership to bring change (including 'followership'), competitive leadership versus collaborative leadership. A development on this topic has already taken place. The 2009 course focused more on "*leadership in the ability to translate strategic-level thinking into practical, 'hands-on' applications in the field and the daily challenges as a result*". This private sector leadership concept did not work and the last versions aimed to be more focused on skills development and collaborative leadership.

Most interviewees agreed that collaborative leadership made the most sense in the peacebuilding context, reflecting the lack of authoritative power, the diversity of actors and the need for cooperation. Yet, further clarification on the preferred leadership, and justification why this was the preferred form, would increase the course relevance. This also counted for the contribution of speakers who came from a variety of backgrounds. Speakers namely added to this confusion by highlighting dissimilar notions based on their own opinion of the concepts of peacebuilding and leadership. Different understandings reflected the variety of the peace sector and should not be necessarily negative, on the condition of a clear theoretical framework. At this moment, speakers based their interventions on discussions with the Course Director and the receipt of basic course information.

To the question of whether the course contents and the different modules were relevant to the overall objective of the training, the answer was overall yes for the last SLCP versions. However, the course would benefit from a clearer and explicit understanding in the concepts of leadership and peacebuilding. The course would also benefit from a slight change in the title, peace instead of peacebuilding, and a more inclusive focus on peacebuilding to include non-UN peace actors. The learning objectives were difficult to measure.

4.1.2 Effectiveness

Do the course contents meet the aims and do training modules meet the learning goals?

In the last course brochure, the participants were promised to:

- Explore leadership styles and skills that effectively deal with peacebuilding challenges
- Challenge yourself in a safe environment in which you can share lessons learned and network
- Enhance your comprehensive understanding of the latest insights in sustainable peacebuilding

In general, the course observation confirmed that these expectations could be met. In terms of the first promise, there was however no explicit conceptual overview or explanation of leadership styles. For the second promise, it must be noted that creating a safe environment was not that easy, but the course, through its methodology, succeeded. For the third learning goal, the term 'comprehensive' would need some further reflection, as peacebuilding trends were presented by experienced practitioners not necessarily presenting the full picture; but rather their own experience.

The course effectiveness depended on the ability to link peacebuilding and leadership. How can alternative perspectives of leadership achieve greater effectiveness in peacebuilding? What are the most influential perspectives of leadership in my specific peacebuilding setting? How will my leadership decisions change if I adopt an alternative perspective in my peacebuilding context?

Overall, the answer collected from the key informant interviews was positive. 97% of the survey respondents stated that the course met their expectations. Former participants stated that *“It was (a) totally leadership enhancing oriented course which was relevant and added value to my current assignments”* or *“The course increased my understanding of sustainable peacebuilding, share lessons learnt and best practices and identify my leadership skills and highlight areas where those could be improved.”*

This confirmed the findings of the individual course evaluations. For the 2016 session, 77% strongly agreed and 15% agreed that the course met the expectations and personal objectives. One participant strongly disagreed, but did not add an explanation. For the 2015 session, an overall rating of 4.5 of 5 was given to the question if the course has met the learning objectives.

Methodology

Most interviewees agreed that the effectiveness of the course grew according to the adaptation of its methodology. The current methodology was the result of many discussions and trials and errors over the past years. The first two versions were not deemed to be very effective since they were too top-down. The use of panels and scenario-based exercises was considered not to work. The current experimental and experience-sharing approach was said to be one of the key strengths of the SLCP, if not its most important asset. Where in the first courses, HSD and GCSP/Interpeace management staff were very involved, their absence in the preparations of the later course sessions was a sign of overall satisfaction with the current course methodology and contents.

The current SLCP consisted of a mixed-methods learning approach and included three different learning methodologies: substantive conceptual inputs to frame the debates and key concepts, exercises (including buzz) and skills development to enhance participants’ capacity building and peer-to-peer learning to address the specific challenges of the participants. The combination of these techniques was deemed rather successful, even though there was always room for improvement. One person thought that the experimental learning would need to be even further enhanced, such as the exercise on rhetoric techniques. Another suggestion was to ask the participants to make presentations to even further utilize the knowledge in the room. An advantage of the course was its horizontal approach in guiding discussions between senior experts and where ideas could be tested in an enabling, learning environment. The individual self-reflection part was regularly quoted as being highly valuable and the peer-to-peer exchange was crucial for the effectiveness of the course. Presentations from experts were deemed necessary in order to stimulate the course discussions and to present new tools and mechanisms, or to remind participants of their existence.

Former participants were asked in the online survey what aspects of the course were most useful for their personal development.

Answer Choices	Responses
Experience-sharing with participants and/or mentors	91.67%
Expert presentations on the topic of leadership	75.00%
Practical exercises	69.44%
Expert presentations on latest peacebuilding trends	61.11%
Self-reflection	61.11%
Peer to peer advice	47.22%
Networking	50.00%
<i>Total Respondents: 36</i>	

Modular approach

The modular course approach was *“designed to build up the participants’ knowledge from the macro-level challenges of sustainable peacebuilding, to the medium-level inter-cultural and gender related issues, and finally to the micro-level building up the participants’ individual leadership capacities.”* A modular approach was indeed effective for participants to link individual sessions to a clear end goal. The condition of a modular approach was that the Course Coordinator regularly situated modules and sessions into the logic of the course to link substance and progress to the participants’ own learning curve. The idea of a so-called funnel, a visual that went from general statements to personal self-assessment, strengthened the course logic and structure. However, some participants noted that this explanation could be even more comprehensive, more in-depth and more regularly referred to so as to maximize the effectiveness of that learning method. Speakers did not consistently refer to the session’s learning goals when introducing their presentation.

Module 1 served as an introduction to the course. The first ‘buzz’ expected from participants to determine the most appropriate leadership practices and characteristics contributing to building sustainable peace. Participants were asked to pick a picture from a fixed set of images, provided by Nexion, that resonated with important qualities for Leadership for Peacebuilding. The interesting discussion and powerful icebreaker was well received in the 2016 course and allowed for a ‘safe’ entry into the course content and made participants brainstorm on skills and attributes. This first session immediately demonstrated the difficulty in keeping the focus on the course topic rather than on leadership or peacebuilding separately. Good guidance and proper debriefings by facilitators and/or mentors were essential for the success of such exercises.

The participants’ experience-sharing was intended to have them brainstorm and to provide constructive and concrete inputs to each other’s challenges. Whilst the approach was valuable, the task was not clear to all participants. Some prepared purely professional challenges not linked to leadership. Further clarification of the objective of this task would help together with clearer definitions of leadership and peacebuilding at the start of the course. Some challenges were adapted during the course to strengthen the learning opportunity. Rather than providing inputs to each other’s challenges, participants had the opportunity to present their own experiences to kick-off the exercise. This session demanded that participants gave of themselves at the very start of the course. Some participants had difficulties in being so transparent on the first day, including for cultural reasons. The sequencing of this session could be questioned. On the other hand, this session made the course very personal from day one and allowed participants to start immediately with their own personal learning curve. In the end, the personal self-reflection was one of the main outcomes of the course. Mentors/facilitators had the crucial task of getting participants out of their comfort zone, to focus their attention on the session objective and to create a conducive learning environment.

Module 2 aimed to update participants on the latest peacebuilding challenges and achievements, explicitly focusing on the shift from peacebuilding to sustaining peace, and to discuss these issues with the experts. Although it was great that speakers could talk from their own experience in this field, it raised two difficulties. First, speakers presented what they knew from their own experiences, and thus did not present a comprehensive overview of peacebuilding. Second, some participants had difficulties relating to this very specific and inside information, such as peacekeepers or government officials who were not necessarily aware of all relevant reports. As in any course, this was a difficult balance given the disparity in pre-knowledge and backgrounds of participants. Unless one worked in this specific context, one could only extract general lessons. In the past (feedback 2012) participants had asked for a short historical overview of the concept of peacebuilding, but it seemed to have disappeared from the course. The underlying question should be what do participants in this course need to extract from the peacebuilding context to improve their leadership skills. The perspective of national peacebuilders was included by Interpeace, but could be further strengthened.

The objective of the UN Visit was to gain a historical perspective of the Geneva-based global security institutions. The term global security institutions could be seen as being over-ambitious. This session, although interesting, broke the course dynamics and should maybe be placed at a different timing. It was the session with the lowest rating in 2016, and recommendations were to drop the visit.

The mentors' experience sharing, the so-called vignettes, allowed for the discussion of concrete case studies of difficult leadership dilemmas in peacebuilding in an enabling and open working group setting. This session was said to be crucial for the success of the course because of its possibility to learn from mistakes rather than from successes. The interesting methodology allowed participants to have a say and a sense of ownership in the challenges of the mentor, and to identify themselves with these senior leaders. This session depended on the willingness and the preparedness of the mentors to place themselves in a position where they could be criticized and to admit their past failures. Leadership challenges of mentors should be regularly updated to reflect the current state of play and to allow participants to connect with these.

Module 3 focused on intercultural aspects to discuss strategies to maximize the effectiveness of multi-cultural teams in overcoming institutional, particularly cultural, but also professional and gender boundaries. The idea was to make explicit that different cultures had different expectations. Among resource personnel and participants, there was disagreement on the usefulness of these two sessions. The content was interesting and was presented in an enthusiastic manner, however it was not clear to all how to frame the substance into the overall framework and what its added value for leadership in peacebuilding was. To some, it remained a very Westernized and business-like presentation.

The lecture of the UNOG Director General, Michael Moller, on the challenges and opportunities of the SDGs and the global peace architecture, was not rated as highly as other sessions. Even though the presence of the UNOG Director General added to the credibility of the course, the content could have been better framed within the course objectives.

Module 4 aimed to present different leadership styles and to reflect on how gender and diversity may impact on leadership. A real overview of different leadership styles, even as a short introduction, was however missing. The presentation gave evidence that leadership depended on your personality, but that with the right training and attention, one could develop it. The speaker said he wanted to stimulate people to think of themselves as leaders and to show how they could become better, more charismatic leaders. The expert presentations were clearly based on extensive research and the psychological insights attracted attention, but again the link with peacebuilding was not clear. The presentation contained many statistics which gave it rather an academic flavour. The session presented a very different vision on leadership by focusing on the individual as leader which is, per some interviewees, not necessarily reflecting the reality in the field. Role models such as Mandela were said not to be relevant to the participants. There was a strong focus on rhetoric and stereo types, and it was difficult to see the relevance of movieclips from the 'Dead Poet's Society' in enhancing collaborative leadership capacities. More attention could have been spent on the other movie of a female civil society leader. It could be questioned whether rhetoric and charisma were the most appropriate techniques or capacities a leader in peacebuilding should acquire.

The online self-awareness test, run on a voluntary basis, aimed to gain a better understanding of the participants' own leadership strengths and weaknesses, and built on the previous session. Its objective was to show that individuals' own perception was unlikely to be the same as the one other people had of them. The tool identified those differences. Participants were asked in advance of the course to fill out the survey and to provide names of peers, supervisors and direct reports to allow a 360° assessment. The tool was tailor-made for collaborative leadership and developed following extensive research by professors in the US over a period of ten years and based on more than 200,000 observations. As such it was said to be scientifically robust. The results of the assessment were provided in a confidential written report to participants and clarification on how to understand the

results were provided orally by an expert. Crucial for this exercise was that sufficient time would be made available for participants to ask questions to the expert, which was not the case in 2016. Nexion, the company offering the test, provided good on-line support.

The expert admitted though that the personality tool was not the end point, but the question was rather how participants would use the results. This concern was in line with a suggestion from another speaker to provide additional techniques to overcome weaknesses in leadership styles. One example given was that when a person tended to dominate, it could help to apply techniques such as preparing agendas and timekeepers, in order to mitigate that weakness.

Module 5 intended to internalise the knowledge of the course to the participants' personal leadership challenges, based on peer to peer advice amongst participants and with the mentors. The sessions aimed to revisit personal leadership challenges and to develop a concrete action plan.⁴

Does the course content sufficiently focus on 'Leadership' and is this particular skill sufficiently exercised/trained?

The course had a specific focus, as agreed upon during its establishment, namely to train the **competence of leadership**. How effective was the course in improving the leadership skills of the participants? A clear majority of the survey respondents (82%) stated that the course focused sufficiently on the aspect of leadership. Comments included: *"The course served more as a revelator to less obvious leadership skills and as a catalyst for me to sharpen those skills in order to become a more effective leader"* to *"As the time was short, many discussions remained rather superficial, not enough time to reflect/discuss past experiences of different participants."*

The concern of how much attention to give to leadership in comparison to peacebuilding remained an inherent concern for the course, as confirmed by several interview partners. Some participants indicated the preference of focusing more on leadership rather than repeating peacebuilding notions. The course has already made improvements in this regard, but the challenges were expected to stay.

Another question remained how to train leadership. The course applied several techniques and combined the vision that leadership could be learned versus authentic leadership that depended on your personality and your ability to charm and inspire. The consequence of the latter would mean that collaborative and transformational leadership worked better for some people than for others. The aim of the course was thus not always clear and was linked to the question of which leadership style the course focused on. Interviewees agreed that *"Leadership is walking the talk"* and that the competence needed to be trained by practice rather than preaching.

In conclusion, the course scored highly on overall effectiveness. This was mainly thanks to the methodology that has grown over the years and become adapted to the requirements of the course objectives and the interests of the participants. The interactive experimental learning style gave space to test assumptions, to share experiences and for self-reflection and was a unique feature that the course could be proud of. In terms of the course content, choices had to be made concerning topics; given that the training lasted only four and half days. It remained a constant challenge to adapt the session content to the latest knowledge in the field and the latest developments. Speakers should refer to the learning goals by introducing their session. The most important challenge remained the linkage between leadership and peacebuilding, to avoid having separate courses on leadership and peacebuilding and to optimize the competence-development.

⁴ The evaluator was not present during this module. No independent assessment of this module could be given.

4.1.3 Quality

How is the quality of the course assured?

The quality of the course was said to depend on its design in combination with the actual ‘ingredients’ of the course, namely facilitators, mentors, speakers and participants. The design was foremost the work of the Course Director(s). The GCSP Course Director of the past years could rely on an extensive network and showed interest in constantly improving the course. Interviewees were impressed by her capability in designing courses. Apparently, extensive discussions with external experts took place to gather new ideas, such as the so-called vignettes/sharing of leadership challenges, and to collect names for speakers. As a result, the course had achieved a degree of satisfaction for most resource personnel, organizers and the mandating organization. In the interviews, it was often said that no substantial changes were needed at this stage and the course was referred to as a ‘well-oiled’ machine.

The importance of the **mentors** in the effective realisation of the course objectives was substantial. Without them, the peer-to-peer advice, the participant’s capacity building and the experience sharing would not be possible. The course had three mentors, one each per group of six or seven participants. The course management aimed to have a good mix of experienced peacebuilding leaders by combining military versus civilian background, Western versus non-Western and to have at least one woman and one from civil society. In the past years, General Robert Gordon, former UN Force Commander in Ethiopia-Eritrea, and Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, former SRSF in Burundi, CAR and Chad have acted as mentors. The third mentor, ideally a female, has changed over the years. Mentors were proposed by intermediaries, either Interpeace or through the UN SML course.

Mentors were clearly personally interested in and supportive of the value of leadership for effective change. Each brought with them a highly relevant and in-depth professional experience of the topic. There seemed to be no substantial disagreements between mentors, even though the relative background of the mentor resulted in different nuances. The success factor was the willingness of mentors to speak openly and honestly about what worked or what did not work in the past. They required a strong sense of humility and a capacity to be self-critical. These characteristics were easier found in retired people, but mentors also needed to remain aware of the latest peacebuilding trends and developments. In general, the mentors contacted for this evaluation, seemed to enjoy this opportunity for self-reflection and for sharing experiences. Yet, new mentors were not always properly briefed and had to learn by doing. Loyalty to the Course Director was a primary reason for remaining dedicated to the course, rather than financial motivations.

The current status-quo of **speakers** on the course seemed equally to be the result of a research over in the last years. Participants appreciated the discussions with high level actors involved in the current peace debates. The course management team had contacted individuals after a recommendation by an intermediate person or organization including UNITAR or Interpeace. Speakers were clearly interested in supporting the course and all said that the financial compensation, if any, was smaller than for other events.

Even though there was little doubt on the level of expertise, enthusiasm and oral speaking talent of the speakers, some interviewees expressed concern that some speakers were insufficiently aware of the peacebuilding context. One participant added in the online survey: *“Leadership skills during the course were very much business focused, and not community focused.”* The appropriateness of experts from the private sector in a peacebuilding course was a recurring issue in the evaluation. The business experts admitted that the peacebuilding context was unique and that they couldn’t claim to be experts on peacebuilding nor be aware of the latest challenges and trends in that field. However, they argued that leadership challenges remained similar or did not see the need to single out a specific leadership for peacebuilding. As a result, presentations remained the same over years.

From a more positive point of view, the benefit was that they had relevant international experience and a great respect for the work of peacebuilders. They could offer the framework and new perspectives from the business world. The course needed to rely on the ability of mentors and facilitators to bridge the link with peacebuilding. Finding speakers that master leadership AND peacebuilding was difficult. Some suggestions for further improvements in terms of the speakers were to have more speakers with field experience from actual crisis situations, and speakers from the South. This would also help to get away from a Westernized UN focus.

The Course Director, GCSP, realised these challenges as noted in the 2016 Course Report: *“It is critical that the leadership material provided in the pre-course leadership assessment and 360 (-tool), the lectures, the debrief and the skill development be coherent throughout the course, relevant to the field of peace and immediately empowering to the participants. Therefore, bridging of the private sector leadership knowledge into the peacebuilding field is key to the success of the course.”*

The course had three **facilitators**, one per group and per mentor. Two facilitators usually came from GCPS, of which one was the Course Director. The third facilitator was the Course Co-Director from Interpeace. The value of the facilitators was to keep the discussions focused on the topic, to keep time and to keep the mentors on track. It was therefore important that the facilitators could be constantly present in the room and that they would exchange updates on the group discussions. In full respect of their function, facilitators could take a slightly more active role and share more of their experience rather than only guide the discussions.

Participants were provided with a **reading list**. The length was appropriate, not too short or not too long. The selection of reading material appeared to have been the topic of disagreement between Course Directors in the past because of different priorities. The main recurring comment from participants was that the list arrived too late which did not allow for enough reading time before the start of the course. For the 2016 course, participants received the list on the Friday before the course, leaving them only two days to read the material. Not all participants read or consulted the list, but overall it was found to be a good reference tool.

What are the different forms of evaluations during and /or after the course (post-evaluation) and can they be improved to better reflect participants’ thoughts and recommendations? How?

Over the years, the evaluation approach of the SLCP resulted in the following evaluation forms:

- 1) The **online pre-course assessment** of the participants has been introduced in 2016 per GCSP policy and aimed to establish a baseline in terms of the current knowledge and skills of participants, their expectations and personal objectives, how the course was relevant to their current/aspired position and how they heard about the course. The pre-course assessment was the baseline for the end-of-course evaluation. Fortunately, the 2016 pre-course survey was kept short.
- 2) The **sounding board** was organized at the end of each day in which one participant per group collected feedback from the participants and discussed these with the course management team. A sounding board was not meant as a proper evaluation format, but rather as a temperature check to make sure no serious concerns of participants were missed and adjustments could be made. Sounding boards could be kept shorter, and even be replaced by listening well to participants’ concerns during the breaks. Six resource persons, three mentors and three facilitators, could do that.
- 3) The **debriefing** at the end of the course was an oral evaluation with two questions: *“How well did this course achieve its learning goals? How much will what you have learned be useful for your personal/professional development?”* Participants could rate these questions on a scale from 1 to 10. Although it was said that this evaluation format was most useful for facilitators to be able to improve the course, comments and ideas of participants were not recorded. Only pictures of the flipchart were

taken without recording the substantive explanation. Additional precaution was needed for this kind of evaluation. First, immediately after the course, participants were still in the course environment. This course had a new and dynamic methodology and as such, it could be expected that participants were happy because of the sharing of experiences, the networking and the contact with senior peacebuilding experts. Second, the debriefing took place orally and in plenary, and a certain level of bias existed due to group pressure and the presence of the course management team. Third, by how much such a discussion was driven by the personal reflection of the Course Directors was difficult to tell.

4) In an **end-of -course evaluation**, all participants were asked to fill out a comprehensive evaluation. As of 2016 the evaluation was online, but a number of questions were also deleted: on speakers, what topics were missing, on structure and length, on networking, on reading material, on relevance and impact and if they would recommend the course. Indeed, providing scores to speakers and facilitators was arbitrary at times. The paper evaluation was long and took time away from actual course time. The online system not only improved the reliability of evaluation summary in quantitative numbers; it also guaranteed that the individual responses of participants would be stored.

5) The final stage of evaluation took place either three, four or six **months after the course** and aimed to assess the impact that the course had had on the professional and personal development of participants. Such feedback remained very subjective; but very necessary to measure the impact of the course in the real working environment of participants. The evaluation should continue to contain a question that can provide specific examples, but could also include verification questions to test statements. This evaluation form would benefit from SMART learning objectives to allow better impact measurement.

How are participants' evaluations reflected in the final course reports?

The contract from 2009 specified that the summary and interpretation of the participants' evaluation forms would be carried out by GCSP at the end of the course to translate that information into the final report.

The fact that the same recommendations kept recurring in the course reports attracted attention. Course reports contained same paragraphs, identical language, at times the exact same evaluation summaries and similar recommendations throughout the year. For example, the course report of 2015 said: *"The 2014 (!) Course was redesigned from the 2013 edition to..."*, which was identical to the course report of 2014. Even if it could be understandable that some similar feedback was collected, it gave the impression that course reports were written hastily. Furthermore, it was not always possible to find proof for the recommendations in the written evaluation summaries. In principle, it was possible that these recommendations were part of the oral evaluation sessions at the end of the course. The exact same recommendations reappeared five times in the course reports of 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012:

- Run the course more often;
- Run the course in French;
- Take it to the peacebuilding countries;
- Run a special course to address specific female leadership issues.

As there were no individual evaluation sheets contained by GCSP, this point of concern could not be further verified. One further observation resulting from the interviews relating to the evaluation was that it did not seem to be properly shared: neither with the course partners, nor the mentors nor the speakers. It was merely the Course Director that shared some limited feedback orally and upon request.

In terms of these recommendations, it can be argued that the course could indeed be run more often, however this would depend on financial decisions of GCSP internal and the availability of resource personnel. Both factors were unlikely. The validity of running the course in French was accurate, but it would depend on the identification of French-speaking mentors and speakers, and again on the availability of funds. Should the course be taken to peacebuilding countries, the experts' travel costs would become more expensive and it would take away the advantage of organizing the course in the neutral setting of Geneva. In order to run specifically on female leadership issues, a scoping exercise would be required to identify the need for such a course in light of the organization of female-targeted leadership courses by other institutions and in comparison with the existing activities on female topics within GCSP.

What learning loops are in place to foster continuous improvement? Were the participants' evaluations adequately considered while designing the next course?

Learning has taken place over the years that the course has been organized as can be shown by the continuous improvements in terms of course design and resource personnel. For example:

- From 2010 to 2011: More focus on leadership
- From 2011 to 2012: Better integration of leadership and peacebuilding. Need for new speakers
- From 2012 to 2013: More peer to peer methodology and skills development
- From 2013 to 2014: More focus on leadership challenges of participants, personal action plan and gendered leadership

A clear evolution in the quality of the course could be noted, including in the attempts to better match peacebuilding and leadership. During the course, the sounding boards were said to be crucial in adjusting the course to the participants needs, both in substance and organisational terms. In between courses, participants' feedback was said to have led to changes such as more interactive sessions, less management, inter-cultural awareness and the length of the course amongst others. Some speakers did in effect not return following a bad evaluation. The outcome of the feedback was discussed at the evaluation retreats from 2010 and 2012. Meetings and discussions between HSD and GCSP, and between GCSP and Interpeace were helpful in jointly deciding on the way forward.

The quality of the course was assured by attracting experienced resource personnel and an interest for continuous improvement of the course. The fact that participants were asked for feedback five times could be seen as being excessive. Evaluation should support the course effectiveness, and should not distract from it. The oral evaluation discussions were claimed to be relevant, but this was difficult to verify. Course reports did not properly reflect the feedback of the participants. In general, a certain level of precaution would be advised for any course evaluation. The actual evaluation was to be found in the impact that the course had on how participants deal with professional changes following the course and whether the course had successfully changed their professional behaviour. SMART learning objectives would allow better impact measurement in the post-course evaluations.

4.1.4 Impact

What was the impact of the course for the participants?

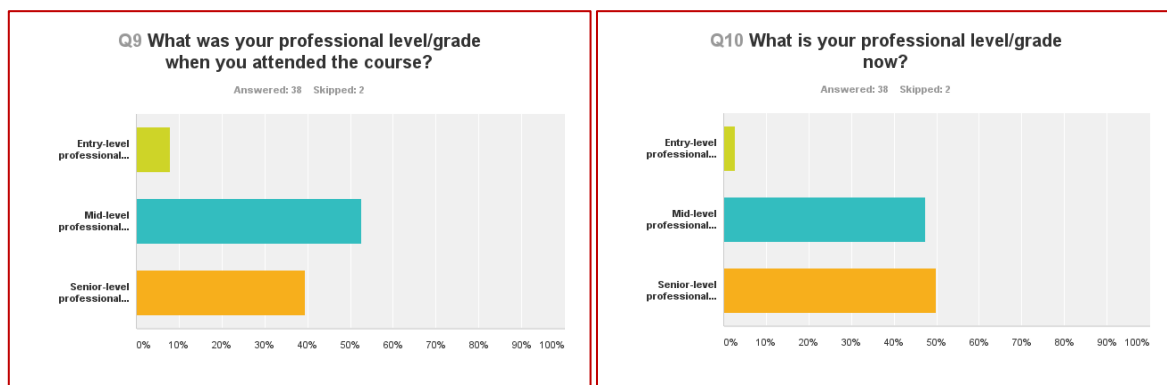
All interviewees were asked for their desired course impact and the following summarizes their answers: The core impact this course should have, was to offer an opportunity for self-reflection. Experience-sharing should lead to improving participants' competences rather than their knowledge. Skills development was necessary in order to overcome leadership challenges that participants were confronted with in their professional lives. The enabling learning environment where lessons could be learnt from mistakes should allow participants to better realize their own leadership style, their

strengths and weaknesses and to reflect on them. In particular, for senior participants it was said that experimental learning was needed, namely a combination of exercises and discussions to internalise and realize the need to change. This approach allowed participants with different pre-knowledge and experience to implement their own learning curve.

It was said that the desired impact could be summarized into reflection at the individual level and an empowered sense of leadership. Thanks to the course, participants should be able to improve their competence in terms of leadership because they became aware of what they needed to do, could develop a personal action plan and received the tools, tips and an understanding of which tools they needed for what. One interviewee summarized it as follows: *“What can I do different to better help local people and national actors to help sustain peace.”* For this impact, an understanding of the recent policy developments, research and lessons learned in the field of sustainable peace was needed for participants to situate their behaviour and role. The desired impact was thus not over-ambitious, but was about small individual changes to improve professional behaviour.

In the online survey, participants were asked several questions on impact, including how useful the course was for their professional development in terms of leadership. The average was ‘merely’ 3.72 out of a total score of 5 (74.4 %). From the 36 former participants answering that question, five scored 2 out of 5 without further explanation.

The percentage was higher for the question *“Did the course help you to better deal with the leadership challenges you experience in your work?”* 83% of the respondents answered yes. Feedback included *“After having course, I learnt to listen others rather than imposing my ideas. Collective voices should be heard and participatory decision making process has been adopted within the organization.”* Or *“more awareness of strengths and weaknesses of leadership style are helping to be more effective in cooperation with diverse teams. Therefore more impact.”* Another comment *“Reminder of what I am doing right already and what I still have to improve or should apply that I have forgotten”* corresponded with oral feedback that one of the speakers also collected namely that participants were aware of most of the course content, but were not sufficiently able to act upon it. More awareness led to more actions.



Another comparison was a factual one, namely the difference in seniority between the position when participants’ attended the course and their current professional level and grade. There was a clear development. Even though a direct causal link between the course and career development could not be proved, a clear development could be noted. Participants of the course have the potential to move up the career ladder.

How much did participants learn, according to their own impressions?

To answer this question, the participant's written evaluations provided the main source of information. First of all, the overall online survey included the question of how much participants had learned during the course. The overall average was 3.91 from a total of 5. Another source of information, was the pre- and post- course assessment of the 2016 course. After the course, participants rated their knowledge according to the three learning goals on average 20% higher. The pre-course assessment was thus a good tool to measure this development. The results were positive.

How was the acquired knowledge and skills used by the senior experts during their deployment?

80% of the online survey respondents answered that they have changed their behaviour and/or actions after the course. Comments collected included: *"To some extent, the course helped me mainly in assuring me of my previous understanding about leadership, and gave me more tools how to apply this understanding better. It also helped me to see things more from a long-term perspective"* or *"When I got to know on the new peace building trends, got some ideas in the field of leadership for sure, the behaviour and dealing with challenges have been changed."* The summary of the post six months-survey of 2012, indicated that the skills development and personal learning were indeed elements that had had an impact.

As a follow-up to the online survey, four participants gave concrete examples how they applied the acquired knowledge and skills. This feedback was very valuable since it showed the impact of the course on the long-term, and not only immediately after the course.

TESTIMONY 1 *"Generally speaking, many of the acquired skills get integrated into our everyday work in a very natural, hardly detectable way, but some concrete examples can be described. The course experience helped me to realise even more how effective dialogue and explanation can be in reconciling differing positions, even in situations where differences seem to be too large. It helped me not to give up in several situations when we were trying to find common position within a group of countries, and we managed to find it. Being a natural networking person even before, I also started to place even more emphasis and invest more time and energy in nurturing contacts and meeting people."*

*

TESTIMONY 2 *"I have been using acquired knowledge and skills in my professional and individual life. Being a human rights activist in the field, we face different hurdles and security challenges. I have adopted the strategy and idea of listening the diverse voice and get to the conclusion. Similarly, the actor mapping and context analysis have been fruitful ideas for situation analysis. Working in team and taking initiatives in post conflict country like Nepal are also added skills that I learnt during 7th senior level peace building course. So far, I have been utilizing learnt skills during the course. "*

*

TESTIMONY 3 *"The course helped me with new ideas as well as reinforcing and reminding me of those leadership elements we take it for granted and not so keen to apply in our daily work. After the course, I have become more conscientious and pro-active in applying all those elements in my work. For instance, participatory leadership. In very busy operation in the field like Eastern Region of Afghanistan, in a complex and extremely sensitive environment, culturally, politically and security, one can easily short-cut the process in order to achieve the desired results. However, even though it may take more time to complete the process, if I involve as many as others in the process, it empowers them more, morally and professionally encouraged to work more effectively, etc. It serves long term organizational purpose much better."*

*

TESTIMONY 4 “First is knowledge about peace process. My organization focus on human rights issue in conflict zone and we still on peace. It is very important to work on Human Rights issue to support peace process. Second is peace process need unity, coalition and solidarity that I was learnt from this course. And I used it for social movement.”

The networking was another positive outcome of the course. Meeting other experts, including participants, facilitators, mentors and speakers was a valuable aspect of the course. About half of the participants stayed in contact with other participants and 60% said that the contacts developed during the course were useful professionally. 36% of the survey respondents said they have stayed in contact with mentors and/or speakers after the course, either occasionally, for professional relationships, or to ask advice on sensitive issues. Participants also tended to share the outcomes of the course with their colleagues and supervisors; 88% responded positively in the online survey. In the post-six months' survey of 2012⁵, participants confirmed that in their view, the course outcomes contributed positively to their work and to their institution.

One suggestion made to improve the sustainability of results for the participants was to introduce post-course mentoring. The idea, existing since 2012, would be that mentors follow up with the participants, each with six or seven, after the course to verify if they have kept to their personal plan of action. These (Skype) meetings would allow participants to identify difficulties and challenges and to effectively change their behaviour in dealing with the leadership challenges they identified in the course. Such an online discussion could be repeated two or three times to strengthen the course outcomes and enable behavioural change. Post-mentoring would help to indicate that leadership development was not learned in a one-week course, but was a life-long process.

The impact of the course had to be found at the level of changed professional behaviour to better deal with leadership challenges. Three quarters of participants confirmed that the course was useful for their professional development and almost all respondents of the online survey stated that they shared the outcomes of the course with their supervisors and peers. Quantitative research demonstrated that participants indeed learned from the course at professional and personal level. Networking proved to be another positive outcome of the course. Post-mentoring activities would strengthen the impact of the course.

4.1.5 Appropriateness

Does the training course target the right experts?

The first question in this regard concerned the target profile of participants. The original request of HSD was to have a senior course for the Swiss Pool of Experts. This course would also be open to non-Swiss participants in order to bring in international experience, to provide visibility and for increased capacity-building.

The course was nominally for senior-level, but what is meant by 'senior'. From the interviews, it was understood that attracting very senior people was unrealistic. It was said that these people were not able to follow a weeklong course. Only in rare cases did real senior people come to the course. The aim was rather to have middle-senior to senior (*current or potential leaders*) with a minority (10 to 20%) under that level. Participants could come from governments, regional and international organisations (including UN, AU, ECOWAS, EU and OSCE) and NGOs. Up to five seats were reserved for Swiss

⁵ The course material only included the summary of the post-xi months' survey 2012, hence the evaluation refers to this year.

participants, nominated by HSD. Diversity in terms of geography, background and position was to be preferred for participants to build trust, to benefit from each other and to be able to contribute to the peer-to-peer methodology. Rather than seniority per se, it was said that the life experience and the whether the person had been in volatile environments mattered more. "Senior was about who has greatest opportunity for impact." Flexibility in selection and decision on an individual basis were welcomed.

How did this look in reality? Indeed, per the responses collected in the online survey⁶, most participants came from the middle-senior to senior category with 36% having 5 to 10 years, and 36% having 10 to 20 years of relevant professional experience in the field of peacebuilding. The concern of whether the course attracted enough senior participants or not recurred from several information sources. The Course Director argued that 2015 saw the best ever level of participants and in 2016 it would have been even better if weren't so many last-minute cancellations (17 instead of 24 participants as planned). Mentors had higher expectations and were disappointed that not more people were directly involved in peace operations or directly dealt with societies to build peace. Military candidates were said to have been underrepresented in order to mirror the comprehensive setting of peacebuilding. One mentor even stated that if the level of participants could not be better adapted to the course objective, he would withdraw his contribution. In his view in the last two years the participants' challenges had only little to do with leadership for peacebuilding. A second concern dealt with the geographical origin of participants where regions such as East Europe, Asia and Africa were overrepresented at the expense of participants from the Middle East and of the South in general.

Is the call for applications sent to the rights persons and/or organizations by GCSP and/or partners in order to receive appropriate applications?

In 2016, only 36 professionals applied for the course upon which 24 were selected and eventually 17 participated. This number was rather small and could not allow a proper mix of participants. The question of how the course was advertised is thus legitimate. Per the course report, the call for applications was sent to a broad network of organisations, embassies and missions. Given the last-minute cancellations, applications received after the initial deadline were accepted. There were five Swiss participants and one participant proposed by UNITAR (originally two). Interpeace announced the course through networks, but did not support any participants in 2016 for financial reasons.

This list of organisations for the call has been adapted over the years. In 2009, it was clear that the call did not reach the target audience and attempts were made to reach more UN and AU senior participants. In 2010, the call was sent to 88 organizations and in 2011 to 93. The application form also underwent changes to allow for a better selection. In addition, since 2012, participants were asked to identify a specific challenge in terms of leadership for peace to be included in their application: 1) What are the leadership challenges you face or have faced in your peacebuilding efforts? 2) What are your expectations of this course? Applicants must provide the situation, the actions and the outcomes.

In the online survey, former participants were asked how they found out about the course. Just under half of the respondents said they heard about the course through GCSP, 21% from former participants, 13% from their employer, and 8% from the Swiss Expert Pool or UNITAR. Only one respondent heard about the course through Interpeace. This reflected the results from the 2016 pre-course assessment where the majority found the course on the GCSP website, through its call or social media, and in the second place from the Swiss Confederation or from friends or colleagues.

⁶ Comparing lists of participant proved to be difficult from a methodological point of view, since organizations use different standards for job titles. This research method was not expected to deliver objective findings.

A proper selection was key to assemble the right mix of participants. The selection has been mainly done by GCSP and Interpeace in the past years. The following criteria were taken into account: diversity, potential to contribute to peer-to-peer methodology, geographic origin, gender and profession. Spreadsheets added justification to the selection. The leadership challenge was at times the crucial argument in selecting a participant. A challenge sometimes revealed if the applicant had the right motivations or not. Further, a balance had to be reached between UN, NGOs, EU, governments, OSCE and others. This approach occasionally resulted in the selection of very junior staff, such as an interpreter of the EUMM Georgia, only because it was an EU staff member. The person admitted that she herself was surprised to have been selected for a senior course. Staff from donor organisations were said to be more easily accepted onto the course, or individuals recommended by persons close to the course. The disappearance of one participant from the classroom during the course caused for confusion in the 2016 edition.

The extension of course length seemed to have resulted in a decreased attractiveness of the course for senior experts. This observation stood in sharp contrast with the original motivation to establish a course for senior experts of the SEP. The SLCP was opened to mid-level participants in the conviction that life experience and opportunity for impact were key assets to be included in the course. Achieving the right mix of participants remained a crucial, but challenging undertaking that required a tailored and well-planned promotion. An incentive to avoid last-minute cancellation could be considered.

4.1.6 Efficiency

The first matter falling under the criterion of efficiency was the course organization.⁷ The participants were overall satisfied with the organization (over 90% in 2016). They agreed that it was timely and efficient and applauded the work of the Course Coordinator. Similar results were noted in the evaluation of 2015. The reading list was judged to have been sent out too late.

The reimbursement and payment of speakers and mentors was said to have been well organized. However, several speakers criticized the last-minute approach in terms of receiving information, lists of participants and agendas. In 2016 they received the list of participants only one week in advance. At times, they had to ask for information themselves. What most of them did appreciate was that the Course Director informed them about a year in advance on the dates of the next course. This allowed timely scheduling of their interventions.

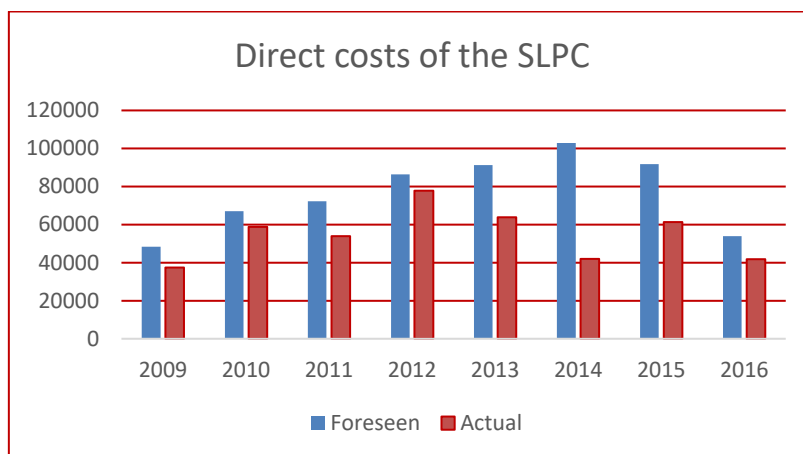
Speakers mainly received information on the course and expectations for their sessions over the phone and by email. Some speakers did admit that the Course Director was at times unavailable, travelling or busy with other events. The new mentor in 2016 stated that her role became clear to her only during the course. The fact that the first-time mentor was combined for group work with the first-time facilitator/Interpeace co-director was not ideal.

The evaluation showed that the Course Coordinators changed at multiple times. This internal GCSP decision seemed to have had consequences in terms of preparation and communication, not only for participants and speakers, but also between the Course Director and Course Coordinator. These observed frustrations and miscommunications affected the image and quality of the course.

⁷ The partnership organization will be discussed under 3.2.

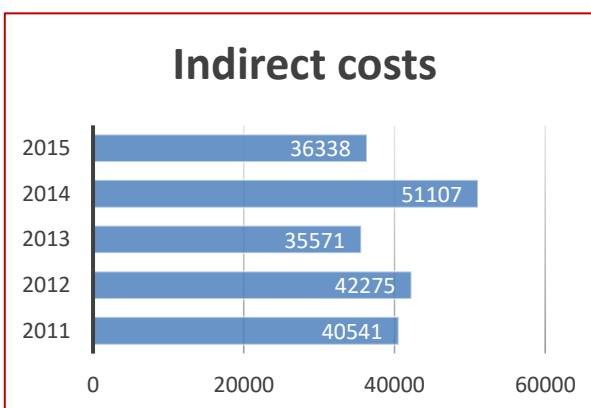
Is the course cost-effective?

One could expect that the course budget would increase in parallel with the extension of the course length from three to four and half days. An overview of the direct costs (speakers, mentors, meals and other related expenses) from 2009 to 2016 did not confirm that. Up until 2015, the budget foreseen by HSD did increase, but the actual expenditure diverged. Two statements can be made based on the graph above. First, the course was always over-budgeted and second, in 2016, the SLCP direct course costs were at almost the same level as 2009.

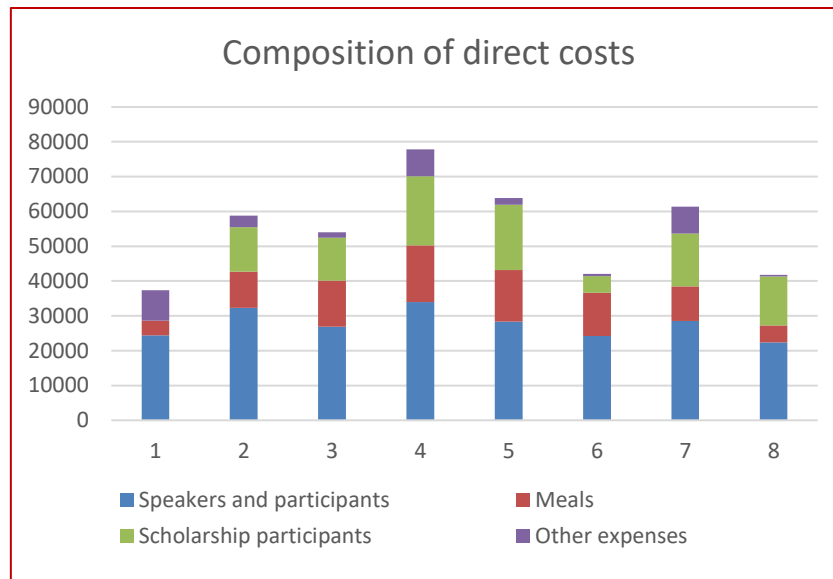


First, the foreseen budget provided by HSD was never reached as savings could be made mainly in international flights and accommodation. Speakers were said not to have asked for business class or even for fees. In some years, costs could be saved by sharing speakers with other events. Savings were of course much appreciated by the donor, but this kind of saving required a little reflection. From the interviews, it became clear that many mentors and speakers remained dedicated to the SLCP because they believed in the course and maintained a sense of loyalty to the Course Director. As a result, they did not object when the Course Director suggested a lower fee, a total absence of salary or when travel costs were not reimbursed. This was unfortunately not a sustainable strategy, especially not when the Course Director was about to change.

The indirect costs of the course included staff costs and facilities support. Payment of over-time for the Course Coordinators was at times apparently included in the direct costs for the SLCP rather than the GCSP contribution. It was stated that a certain number of extra workhours were justified given the size of the course. However, the indirect costs for the SLCP were not small over the years, as shown by the graph for the years for which documentation was available. The costs corresponded to about 420 faculty and 380 staff hours for 2012, thus about 10 weeks of 40 working hours. The absence of time sheets did not allow to cross-verify the efforts. The indirect costs did not include the costs borne by staff from Interpeace or UNITAR or the costs to sponsor the Swiss participants.



Second, the budget for the 2016 course underwent drastic changes in comparison with the previous years. Despite the request of HSD to maintain the SLCP budget at about 100,000 CHF, GCSP decided to decrease the course costs since it became part of the core contribution. GCSP was apparently concerned by the financial sustainability of the course, and the idea to add a course fee remained present.



(Examples of other expenses: Post-mentoring activities, gifts to speakers without honorarium, UN Visit, Books, Geneva tour, planning meeting costs, paid overtime)

The Course Director cut where possible and the actual direct costs, without sponsored participants, came to 27,747 CHF. Extras like the Geneva visit, expensive meals, coffee breaks, course dinner and one fee for one mentor were cut. The Course Coordinator bought refreshers for the coffee breaks in the local supermarket instead of having catering. It was said that no savings were made on the contents and quality of the course essence. Therefore, some wondered if the SLCP was too luxurious and over budgeted before. The only substantial difference was said to be the post-mentoring, this was not realized in 2016 for budgeting reasons. However, in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, post-mentoring was foreseen within the estimated costs (2,400 CHF) and was also not realized. Financial considerations were thus not the full reason for not implementing post-mentoring activities.

Another point was whether or not the current speakers and mentors constituted value for money. A particular concern shared by several interviewees, was the high salary of John Antonakis (5000 euro for ½ day). The Course Director argued that his presentation was essential for the course and always appreciated by the participants. The participants' feedback did indeed rate his performance highly on several occasions, although not all the time as was argued. Some interviewees further claimed that participants liked his presentation for the psychological aspect, but worried about his understanding of comprehension for the peacebuilding context. The evaluation furthermore identified that the presentation of Mr. Antonakis was almost identical to his Ted+ talk that could be watched online and free of charge. The difference between his elevated fee and the complete absence of payment for other speakers was difficult to justify.

A final cost concern was whether the course was not too resource-heavy, in terms of having three mentors, three facilitators plus external speakers. To this question, some interviewees said that this was actually a cheap course on facilitation and that the number of resource people was justified in order to implement the intensive methodology. The UN SML course for example had three mentors per group. Another opinion however agreed that the SLCP was resource-heavy and that the experience of the participants in the room could be better used. A suggestion would be to couple the scholarship to an obligation to present on their experience in peacebuilding in their respective country during the SLCP.

In terms of efficiency; the difference between the funds that HSD makes available for the course and the actual expenditure by GCSP was remarkable. In previous years, the course was not really budget-friendly and offered expensive meals and extras. However, the current practice of cutting as much costs as possible, including payments and reimbursements of resource personnel could not be perceived to be sustainable and beneficial for the course quality in the long-term.

Conclusion on the Course Evaluation

In terms of accountability, the past editions of the SLCP Course have by and large met their objectives. The course and its modules were relevant to a great extent. The course was effective in meeting the learning objectives, albeit some adjustments could strengthen the effectiveness. The quality of the course depended on its resource personnel, unique methodology and the continuous interest of course organizers to constantly look for improvements. Feedback from participants were considered to improve the course; but evaluations could be better summarized in the course reports. The desired impact of the course matched the overall actual impact, but depended on the appropriate selection of participants. The right mix of participants was a recurring challenge.

In terms of learning, the course could be further adapted to meet the future needs of the participants. A stronger linkage between peacebuilding and leadership could be made, whereas the focus on collaborative leadership could be made more explicit. A short conceptual introduction for both concepts would allow the learning potential to increase. Speakers from the business world could adapt their expertise better to the peacebuilding context. The peer-to-peer methodology should be kept and investments should be made to sustain the quality of resource personnel in the future.

4.2 Partnership Evaluation

How can the organizational structure of the course be improved to ensure an efficient course and efficient fulfilment of GCSP's mandate? How can/should the different partners improve their own contribution?

4.2.1 Appropriateness

Is the partner structure appropriate and does it respect the needs and requests of the requesting authority?

The course partnership consisted of GCSP, Interpeace and UNITAR on behalf of the FDFA. A relevant question in this regard was if the partnership was and remains to be appropriate and if the right partners were included. What was the interest of each partner to be involved and what did they bring to the table?

The course fitted into a wider strategic cooperation between GCSP and HSD. GCSP was a natural choice as course organizer as it already organized the basic course on peacebuilding for the Swiss Pool of Experts. In the context of its numerous trainings (63 planned for 2017) and its excellent reputation as centre for learning and research, GCSP remained an obvious partner for the SLCP. Since 2014, GCSP has doubled the number of courses. The SLCP fitted into their Leadership, Crisis and Conflict management programme, and more specifically within its peacebuilding cluster. However, the SLCP was different from the other leadership courses through its methodology and focus on peacebuilding. Within GCSP, the SLCP became a reference for other trainings that increasingly used similar methodology reflecting changes in overall adult learning methodologies.

Interpeace was brought into the partnership to add a different and more operational approach to peacebuilding, complementing the more governmental approach that GCSP had. From the perspective of Interpeace, the SLCP was an opportunity to engage with stakeholders in the field and to help shape a greater awareness in Interpeace's vision of "peace". The course allowed Interpeace to "*influence the minds of the people in the room and to build up networks*". Interpeace contributed in terms of time and staff resources for course design and implementation, paid from out of their own budget and in the past offering some scholarships. Due to financial reasons, the sponsorship was no longer available in 2016, but there was an interest to expand capacity-building and advising also in the context of IPAT.

UNITAR was contacted to provide UN legitimacy to the course; a UN label. It was deemed appropriate to include them in order to increase the credibility and visibility of the course and to access UNITAR's network of speakers. As a training expert, its involvement seemed logical. In the past, they had been more involved, but towards 2016 their involvement became significantly reduced.

The legal and financial partnership for the SLCP was between FDFA and GCSP in order to simplify the administrative burden. The two other partners were not part of the contract. How the partnership between GCSP and the two other partners was translated into practice was up to GCSP. The two other partners hardly had contact with HSD directly, except for the evaluation retreats in 2010 and 2012.

There seemed to be few discussions amongst interviewees on whether the right partners were involved by just looking at the profile and the possible added value of each partner on paper. The only consideration was that both GCSP and Interpeace brought experience in peacebuilding, but both institutions had no specific experience with the topic of leadership. Throughout the years, some voices said that a partnership with a leadership institution would have made more sense.

In principle, the partnership was appropriate since in theory each partner added comparative advantages to the course. All partners had respect for the fact that the financial and legal obligations were shared between FDFA and GCSP, and in that aspect, the needs and requests of the requesting authority were valued. Within GCSP, the risk was that the departure of the Course Director would impact the course relevance and quality. The increase in courses in GCSP was contrasting with the desire to cut costs on the SPLC course.

4.2.2 Partnership between GCSP, Interpeace and UNITAR

Is the coordination structure between the current partners effective and efficient?

A different discussion came about when discussing whether the coordination structure between the current partners was indeed effective and efficient. Four challenges can be identified in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership without questioning the effectiveness of the course as such, which was discussed above.

First, there was a difficulty in terms of concepts and substance, which better clarified the ambiguity of the concept of leadership as utilized in the course. The partnership between GCSP and Interpeace came about exactly to match the different visions the institutions have on the concepts of peace and leadership and to link the GCSP top-down with the bottom-up approach of Interpeace. It was however, exactly these differences that undermined the effectiveness of the partnership, and possibly also the course. The visions of GCPS and Interpeace on how to sustain peace contradicted each other at times. For Interpeace, it was important that the course mirrored their view on leadership, but they felt that GCSP did not spend sufficient time in further improving the course.

Second, the desire of HSD to work only through one partner, namely GCSP, created legal and accountability challenges. The Course Director had final responsibility for the quality and the conduct of the course. The result was an unevenness in the partnership and Interpeace did not feel like a full partner. In 2011 and 2012, attempts were made to draft a Terms of Reference between Interpeace and GCSP following problems concerning the failure to meet deadlines. This Memorandum of Understanding specified the responsibilities of each partner, such as cooperation to design the programme, concept, learning goals and identification of speakers. In these draft ToR, the Course Director remained the point of contact for speakers, resource persons and participants, but the selection of participants and reading material would be done jointly. Interpeace preferred an agreement between the three partners, including HSD, but as this would have been too complicated, the document remained unsigned.

Also in terms of visibility and promotion, there was no full partnership. Even though the draft ToRs specified that the course brochure would include all partner logos, Interpeace complained that the SLCP course became GCPS branded. It was said that there was no joint marketing. Indeed, in January 2017 the course could not be found on the websites of Interpeace and UNITAR. Former participants and resource personnel often only realized during the course that the SLCP was co-organized by Interpeace and UNITAR. The four logos were pictured on the certificate, but only the two Course Directors signed the document.

Third, the current partnership created a financial inequality between GCSP and Interpeace, where the latter felt that its expenses in terms of staff time were not compensated for. In fact, lacking transparency on budget created unnecessary frustration. When the SLCP was funded through an individual project proposal, it was unclear whether GCSP staff costs were also covered from that budget line where similar costs from the partners were not. Now that the SLCP budget came from the GCSP core contribution, GCSP argued that there would be no issue anymore related to finances as it

was all equal. Still, because the partners had no clue about the actual course costs, the financial side remained a concern for the partnership.

Fourth, the partnership experienced challenges in terms of the organisation. Especially in the early years, the partners had to acclimatise to one another and build trust. The contact was accompanied by an intense email communication and GCSP stated that lots of investment at the working level had to be put into the partnership. Despite an apparent interest in consensual decision-making, GCSP was clearly driving the course design, contact with speakers and the post-course follow-up. Most speakers confirmed that they were only in contact with GCSP and most of the work was done by GCSP. Core team meetings hardly took place⁸ and when they did they were very close to the course start.

Interpeace was involved in the selection of participants, and had an input in some sessions and in the recruitment of some speakers. The Interpeace Director contributed to the course as a speaker. Interpeace felt that its original contribution to the design of the course was not properly recognized and saw it as a real problem that it had no access to the alumni. The building up of a network in the field was a primary reason for Interpeace to be involved in the course. The course report and written participants' evaluation summary was not shared outside GCSP and session feedback was given only upon request. An absence of a joint learning experience after each course was clearly a missed opportunity. The evaluation only found record of a debriefing between GCSP and Interpeace in 2011.

The contribution of UNITAR was in terms of suggesting some speakers and mentors and sponsoring a few participants, often from organizations that would not have been represented without UNITAR's involvement. For 2016, they sent one participant; the second one cancelled. In the past, UNITAR apparently facilitated the entrance of participants into the UN building. UNITAR was kept informed of the programme, learning goals and the list of participants, but excepting the presence at the official open dinner, UNITAR was not further involved in the course and did not contribute in terms of design, preparations or facilitation. During the evaluation, it was said that the reason had to be found in the burden of work for UNITAR staff rather than a lack of interest or an unwillingness of GCSP to include them. UNITAR's focus would be shifting to online learning and the number of personnel with peacekeeping experience was reduced. If UNITAR would be asked to engage more, a financial need would arise to cover the staff costs.

The passive approach of UNITAR was said to be present from the beginning. They joined when the course was already designed and never showed any real commitment to be more involved. This passive status of UNITAR was not disapproved of by all interview partners; it provided a link with the UN and an extra channel for the call for applications without asking anything in return. However, other interviewees questioned the added value of UNITAR and stated that GCSP and Interpeace had themselves sufficient access the UN. Some experts suggested to drop UNITAR.

The partnership seemed to be complementary and to strengthen the credibility of the course. The fact that GCSP was the only SPLC mandate holder created frustrations and frictions between GCSP and Interpeace. Interpeace and UNITAR both showed respect for the decision of HSD to work through one partner and this was said not to be a deal-breaker. However, calls were made to critically reflect on the partnership and Interpeace noted the desire to renegotiate the business model, decision-making, marketing, and to increase the transparency in budget matters. This external evaluation in combination with staff changes was seen as a good opportunity to discuss the partnership and to build the foundation to further increase the credibility and effectiveness of the course. The role of UNITAR needs to be reconsidered.

⁸ Very little proof of such meetings or minutes are kept in the course documentation.

4.2.3 Partnership between HSD and GCSP

Were transparency and regular consultations with the HSD enough respected to allow the HSD to monitor and/or intervene in time if/when necessary?

This evaluation identified a certain reluctance on the part of GCSP to regularly update HSD. Exchange of information was limited and occurred last minute or only upon request, as was already the case with the partners, speakers and mentors. Key course documentation arrived at HSD sometimes a week or two in advance of the course, and did not allow enough time for serious feedback. Some information or clarifications were missing and had to be chased up. The desk review indicated that the course organizers did occasionally ask feedback timely, but this approach was not consistent over the years. Deadline sheets existed to facilitate the cooperation between HSD and GCSP, but were shared late or not properly followed. The evaluation demonstrated that HSD did not possess all relevant documents related to the courses of the past years, even though these documents were included in the course package the evaluator received from GCSP. Course reports were sent within three months after the end of the course, as agreed.

The constant changing of Course Coordinator was not helpful in this regard as this new person had to get familiarized with the procedures and specificities of the course in a short time frame. The Course Director took over communication and administrative matters that could have been done by the Course Coordinator. Stability and the proper briefing of the Course Coordinator could have saved time and could have added to institutional knowledge of the course.

Another observation dealt with regular meetings between GCSP and HSD, or the lack thereof. Regular physical meetings proved to be very useful, when they did take place for example on 22 March 2011. The requirement for an annual meeting was written in the contract. However, it seemed that they did not occur regularly. This was confirmed by the non-utilization of funds to travel to Bern for planning meetings in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. Communication seemed to have been limited as the course organizers were under pressure and had little time.

Given this missing proactive approach, HSD decided in 2016 to draft a letter of agreement to smooth the transition and to compensate for the absence of the project proposal of the last years. This letter aimed to specify the information-sharing and requests. For GCSP, this letter of agreement was not deemed necessary and was interpreted as a sign of over-monitoring. The need of HSD to obtain basic and timely updates on developments and changes was not fully appreciated.

Does the current contracting agreement allow GCSP to reach the desired outcomes as defined by HSD?

The decision of HSD to include the costs of the SLCP into the core contribution had an undesired effect on the organisation of the course. The amount that GCSP decided to spend on the course went down drastically. GCSP argued that the core contribution was insufficient to include the two additional courses, the SLCP and the Basic course. In the Letter of Agreement HSD and GCSP agreed *that "Generally speaking, the SLCP course will remain the same as in previous years regarding the aim and objectives of the course, the programme and the teaching methodology, the participants' profiles, the evaluation and the budget."* Even though, HSD sought additional confirmation that the course budgets would stay at the level as previously defined, the course budget went down to 27,747 CHF for the core budget and 14,041 CHF for scholarship expenditures, compared to 46,186 CHF and 15,129 CHF in 2015. It became clear that the pressure to cut costs came from GCSP internally to ensure value for money, and not from HSD directly. However, the fact that the inclusion into the core contribution was mainly due to administrative rather than financial motivations was not fully understood. In the GCSP

interviews, there was no explicit realization of the possibility that HSD could open the tender to other institutions.

The departure of the Course Director could have an impact on the quality of the course, given her long-term experience in designing and organizing the course. Concerns about how this staff change would influence the quality of the course were also noted from the side of the partners and mentors. In this context, HSD was also not fully in the picture on the departure of the Course Director and the appointment of the successor.

Has the GCSP adequately followed, so far, the basic agreements and recommendations expressed by the HSD year after year?

The evaluation showed that GCSP by and large respected the basic agreement and recommendations. The course organizers expressed a willingness to follow the recommendations of HSD and deemed the cooperation with HSD successful. It was much appreciated that HSD represented a government that engaged at this level and supported this kind of course methodology. At the same time GCSP perceived themselves to be more than just 'an implementer'. This resulted in the failure to follow a number of basic agreements and recommendations.

A clear example where GCSP did not fully respect the needs of HSD was the discussion about the missing evaluation documentation. As these templates were not shared, HSD repeatedly asked for them, confirming the lack of a proactive approach of GCSP to inform HSD. In this context, HSD was informed about the plan to change the evaluation practice, corresponding to GCSP policy, without consulting HSD and without realizing this was not agreed to in the contracts. In the end, GCSP did not implement the new evaluation practice for 2015 after discussions with HSD. GCSP introduced the online approach and the pre-assessment of participants in 2016 to streamline the SLCP with its other courses, now that the SLCP was a part of the core contribution.

Furthermore, GCSP did not follow the agreements when it came to the storage of participant evaluation forms, as specified in paragraph 5.2 of the Framework Agreement. Contractually, relevant documents have to be archived for 10 years but the Course Director only saved electronic versions of the evaluation summaries and not the paper versions of the individual participants' response. Despite the request of HSD to include the HIPPO report into the reading list, this document was not included. The related decision of the Security Council was included.

Has the GCSP adequately followed, so far, the FDFA 'duties on visibility'?

The SLCP aimed to strengthen the visibility of GCSP and HSD as partner institutions in peacebuilding training, as specified in the previous contracts. The discussion on visibility relates to the question of whether the SLCP was a GCSP course or a product of the partnership. The evaluation identified room for improvement in announcing that this course was organized on behalf of the FDFA. Before joining the course, many participants did not realize the fact that the HSD was funding the course. There was no reference to the partnership or to HSD in the introduction of the course. The Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding was not mentioned throughout the course. The fact that a Swiss representative delivered a keynote speech at the official dinner, or for other years at lunches, was an effective way to introduce the role of the FDFA in the organization of the course.

The fact that all logos were not always added to the course brochure or webpages was another observation in this regard. For the course in 2017, the SLCP was branded as a GCSP product. The webpage and brochure stated *"The course has been run by the GCSP on behalf of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland since 2009, in partnership with IPAT, an initiative of*

Interpeace,” but only the GCSP logo was included. Under the Course Directors, reference was made to Mr. Bernardo Arevalo de Leon. There was no reference to UNITAR. The alumni community referred only to GCSP alumni as in previous years. This was in sharp contrast to the 2016 course, where the four logos were included. Even though HSD disagreed with the brochure, the document was placed online at the GCSP website.

Has the GCSP adequately followed, so far, the basic agreements and recommendations expressed by the HSD regarding the scholarship beneficiaries’ selection year after year?

The change in contract agreement equally influenced the selection of scholarships. As long as SLCP was subject to an individual project proposal, the Course Director had freedom of choice to grant the scholarships as long as it was in agreement with the list of priority countries from HSD. After inclusion into the core contribution, the procedure changed and the Course Director now had to compete/bid within GCSP internally to obtain scholarships for the SLCP. This would mean that there would no longer be a fixed number of scholarships. Over the years, including 2016, the budget spent on scholarships remained more or less the same and the number was around seven.

Course organizers have expressed disappointment when a person suitable for the course could at times not be provided with a scholarship. This could happen when the person was not a country national working in his/her own country which did not appear on the list of Swiss priority countries. There was overall comprehension for this decision and satisfaction where flexibility was applied, when possible. GCSP was well aware of the priorities, selection criteria and reimbursement conditions by HSD, and respected these.

The absence of a proactive approach in updating HSD on the course preparations seemed not to have been done on purpose, but the understanding that HSD needed to be informed for auditing reasons rather than controlling motivations was not fully present. Internal GCSP decisions related to their staff had a negative impact on the efficiency of the partnership between GCSP and HSD. As a result of the inclusion of the SLCP in the “contrat des prestations” of GCSP, the control of HSD over the SLCP decreased, as shown on the basis of the evaluation practice and the decision on the budget. The discussion on evaluation practices made an internal dilemma of GCSP explicit, namely how to integrate a specific course on behalf of HSD, into their GCSP programme.

4.2.4 Relevance

Do the course outcomes strengthen Switzerland’s geographic and thematic priorities in human security?

In the context of its foreign policy’s pillar of peace promotion, the SLCP corresponded to the aspiration to establish strategies to respond to crisis and conflicts. The original objective of the SLCP was to train the Swiss Experts Pool in an interventional setting in combination with capacity-building for countries from the South. Leadership came from a need for the Expert Pool to better support senior experts. Per the Framework Agreement, GCSP agreed to act in correspondence with the priority topics and regions of Switzerland.

For the SEP, the “choice of assignments was guided by Switzerland's geographic and thematic priorities in human security. These include:

- *mediation and facilitation of peace agreements*
- *strengthening state structures and the rule of law*
- *advising judicial, police, customs and border authorities*

- *international humanitarian law and human rights*
- *elections*
- *dealing with the past*⁹

The course objectives have the potential to contribute to these priorities. The actual course outcomes have been summarized under the heading of impact, where it was confirmed that participants had received the opportunity to enhance their understanding of both leadership and sustainable peacebuilding.

However, the actual contribution of the course to the priorities of Switzerland continued to depend on the selection of participants and the appropriate balance of two ingredients. First, the right mix of participants in the room defined the potential for the peer-to-peer methodology, the potential for knowledge exchange raised with the right mix of participants. Participants lacking leadership experience would automatically present standard professional “vignettes” rather than real leadership challenges. Second, the right profile defined the possibility for participants to apply the acquired knowledge into their work. The course outcomes could thus only strengthen Switzerland’s priorities if investments were made in the right persons. The question should be what do participants need leadership for. What effect would the training of this person have on peace? This was of course a difficult aspect to measure, but the feedback of the participants showed a positive picture, including after considerable time upon completion of the course.

The next matter involved how Swiss the course was. Indirectly, the course promoted the Swiss priorities through GCSP and the fact that the course was held in Geneva. In terms of visibility, the evaluation noted that there would be room for improvement to promote HSD as the financier of the course. Speakers and resource personnel were often not consciously aware of the priorities of Switzerland. They were not explicitly informed about these in preparation of the course. Some speakers were aware of the policy of Switzerland through other means.

Was gender sufficiently considered and incorporated in the course, for instance as a topic or while selecting participants?

The ‘Jahresvertrag’ specified that GCSP must take minorities into account. Indeed, gender had become a standard topic in the course, and equally responded to the interest of participants for this topic.

The previous HSD project proposals considered the course to be gender-relevant. Separate sessions on gender were included: a brainstorming on the importance of gender for leadership at the end of the third day and a clear focus on gender in the presentation of Professor Antonakis on the fourth day. In addition, throughout the other sessions the topic of gender was sufficiently integrated by the other speakers. At times, speakers were specifically asked to talk about gender, but it seemed that for most of the resource personnel the topic had become a natural element in the sharing of experiences.

One of the three mentors was a woman, which helped in integrating the topic into the course. The 2016 female mentor never saw her gender as a leadership challenge in itself, but did admit to it being a contributing factor. Finally, the gender ratio was often the most difficult challenge in courses related to peacebuilding and crisis management, especially at the senior level. This was not necessarily a result of the selection, but also of the availability of female applicants. The SLCP confirmed that female candidates were often found at a more junior level. Therefore, the flexibility to decide on a case-by-case basis in terms of the candidate selection facilitates a more gender-friendly selection.

⁹ [Swiss Experts Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding](#), last consulted on 28 January 2017.

Two final considerations on the topic of gender were brought up in the evaluation. First, should gender in the course be discussed in the context of equal challenges and discrimination, or in the light of other pertinent gender challenges related to peacekeeping, such as sexual abuse and how to react to that as a (female) leader. Second, is the priority gender or diversity? It could be argued that gender was a part of diversity and therefore it would make more sense to shift focus to diversity which would also allow for the inclusion of ethnicity, age and other challenges.

The SPLC had indeed the potential to contribute to Switzerland's priorities in human security. The size of that contribution depended on the right selection of participants, and the corresponding investment in their development. The course was gender mainstreamed, since the topic was sufficiently included without becoming a mantra. The course thus met the gender-sensitivity requirement of the project proposal document.

Conclusion on the partnership evaluation

In terms of accountability, each partner had the potential to bring comparative advantages to the partnership. Due to a lack of transparency and efficiency, the partnership was unable to overcome a number of intrinsic challenges. The contracting agreement resulted in a two-level partnership to the dissatisfaction of one partner. The current contracting agreement allowed GCSP to train Swiss experts from the Pool together with international experts in a setting that was overall effective and relevant. The inclusion into the core budget seemed to have given GCSP the impression that the SLCP could now be a fully independent GCSP product, even when good collaboration with HSD was deemed critical from the side of GCSP. This was however not the original intention since HSD wanted to be further consulted on financial and substantive matters. It would be interesting to compare this finding with the compliance of HSD agreements and recommendations for the Basic Course on Peacebuilding.

In terms of learning, the partnership would benefit from the following clarifications. 1) Was the involvement of UNITAR still an added value? 2) How can the GCSP-Interpeace partnership be strengthened taking into account the interests of both partners in the existing legal and financial framework? 3) How can the SPLC course maintain its uniqueness and quality, and respect HSD needs now that it became fully integrated into GCSP programme?

5. Conclusions

This evaluation concludes that regarding the **first evaluation question** on whether the past editions of the SLCP courses have met their objectives; the overall answer is yes. The SLCP course as it stands now, is a unique course, combining the aspects of peacebuilding and leadership, and as a result fills a niche in the training environment. Senior civilian experts from the Swiss Pool of Experts are trained together with selected applicants including from priority countries in an international environment. The strength of the course is the peer-to-peer methodology with a strong focus on skills development and learning from experience. The course logic going from a broad context setting to a personal action plan is appropriate. The course is unique in terms of its open learning environment where senior experts share their personal leadership challenges and are willing to share their failures and lessons learned. The mentors play a role that can hardly be underestimated to encourage participants to work on their own leadership style and personal development. From the participants' feedback, it is clear that the impact of the course indeed lies in the personal reflection and the awareness-raising of individual leadership styles and ways to improve these.

The course has already undergone intense developments over the years in order to adapt to the needs of the participants. The course would however benefit from a clarification of the two key concepts, leadership and peacebuilding, to further increase the learning potential. The inherent challenge of the course is expected to remain how these two concepts can be further linked, namely which leadership is needed to support sustainable peace. The methodology of the course leaves sufficient room to integrate recent developments in both domains. The difficulty is not about finding speakers that are expert in either one of the two domains, but speakers who are able to bridge the concepts and to link their knowledge with the participants' working environment. The fact that speakers come from very diverse backgrounds, can be applauded. However, it results in a proliferation of interpretations of key concepts, through which the red line of the course can become diffuse. Facilitators play a crucial role in terms of bringing the knowledge back to the learning objectives. The departure of the Course Director is a valid concern given her institutional knowledge and networking.

The course outcomes are the product of design, resource personnel and participants. A proper and appropriate selection of the participants is thus a precondition to ensuring the quality of the course. The diversity of backgrounds and countries needs to be in balance with the need for coherence to allow the peer-to-peer methodology to function. Scholarships are essential to guarantee the involvement of participants from the south. The course would benefit from a more efficient course organisation avoiding last-minute communications with speakers and participants and timely preparations. Finally, the full financial potential provided by the donor is not fully used. This resulted in an unsustainable practice in terms of relying on the loyalty of speakers to contribute to the course instead of properly compensating resource personnel's efforts. The budget foreseen by the donor equally leaves room to enhance the impact of the course in terms of offering post-mentoring activities. The budget-saving considerations in the last year have made the course more cost-efficient and increased the value for money.

On the **second evaluation question**, how the organizational structure of the course can be improved to ensure an efficient course and effective fulfilment of GCSP's mandate, it can be concluded that the evaluation came at the right time. The staff changes in both GCSP and Interpeace in combination with the decision of HSD to integrate the course budget into the core contribution to GCSP is an opportune moment for renewed consultations on the future of the partnership. There is room for more efficiency in terms of the communication between the partners and in respecting the needs of all partners.

The evaluation deemed that the different approaches of GCSP and Interpeace on leadership and peacebuilding could be complementary on the condition of establishing transparency and clear

agreements. Clear and open discussions on the future of the partnership are needed to overcome the growth of existing frustrations in the partnership. The evaluation did not identify a serious need to redirect the partnership, as this would have a negative impact on the quality of the course and would destroy the efforts put into the course in the last few years. The partnership would benefit from recognizing the efforts that Interpeace put into the course and from joint visibility. Better coordination and efficient communication would allow for an increase in the involvement of Interpeace in the course preparations and follow-up. The fact that the course report was not a joint product and that the course budget was not made known to partners prevented any real partnership from forming. The original motivation as to why UNITAR joined the course has become lost. In combination with an apparent incapacity to effectively commit to the course, the added value of UNITAR to the course partnership would require reconsideration.

There is the intrinsic difficulty for GCSP of how to position a HSD-mandated course into the independent nature of the institute and into the logic of its course programme. There is the risk that the SLCP becomes just another course, and loses its uniqueness. The inclusion into the core contribution resulted in the feeling of ownership of the course by GCSP and a decreased appreciation of the motivation of HSD to fund this course. Inefficient communication and lack of updates on the course developments, despite the letter of agreement of 2016, showed a misunderstanding of the accountability requirements of governmental funds. GCSP did not respect the agreements with HSD in terms of the storage of evaluation documents and the expectation to maintain the course budget in 2016. A compromise needs be found between the HSD's need for visibility and GCSP's desire for independence. The course does strengthen Switzerland's geographic and thematic priorities and the course applies a gender-mainstreaming approach.

In overall conclusion, the course continued to be effective although improvements could be made in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness. The desired impact of the course to contribute to enhancing leadership skills for peacebuilding was confirmed by former participants. The success of the course was to be found in its ambition to link peacebuilding and leadership and its innovative and open peer-to-peer learning methodology.

The course partnership would benefit from open and transparent discussion to clarify the future of the cooperation. The added value of UNITAR became questionable. The partnership between GCSP and Interpeace would need to be clarified in terms visibility, division of responsibilities and the conceptual substance of the course. The relationship between HSD and GCSP could be improved by agreeing how far the SLCP course could be integrated into the overall GCSP course programme with full respect observed for the needs of HSD in terms of visibility, monitoring and relevance.

No substantial problem/deal breaker with the course and the course partnership was identified in this evaluation on the condition that urgent and constructive consultations take place between all partners to build a sustainable foundation for the future of the course.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations on the course

On the course

1. Maintain the relevance of the course by integrating the two key concepts, namely peace(building) and leadership;
2. Better demarcate the concept of peacebuilding or change the course title from peacebuilding to peace;
3. Broaden the course focus to include peacebuilding activities of other regional and local actors;
4. Strengthen the focus on collaborative leadership throughout the course, and justify its choice;
5. Further enhance the capacity-building aspect of the course, and highlight the topic of followship;
6. Continue to offer the latest developments and insights on peacebuilding and leadership;
7. Use the SLCP course to build up and consolidate knowledge in the niche of leadership for peacebuilding.

On the course methodology

1. Continue to balance the course contents between the two key concepts and aim to effectively match leadership with peacebuilding throughout the course;
2. Keep the peer to peer methodology in an open and safe learning environment;
3. Consider running post-course mentoring activities with the participants.

On individual course sessions

1. Add a short conceptual introduction to peacebuilding and leadership at the start of the course;
2. Strengthen the focus of participants' challenges on leadership and not on professional challenges;
3. Regularly update the mentors' leadership challenges to reflect the current state of play;
4. Clarify what modules three and four mean in practice for peacebuilders;
5. Broaden the focus from gender to diversity;
6. Ensure sufficient time for debriefing of the online assessment tool, and consider better follow-up to the assessment tool;
7. Consider dropping the UN Visit, or make it more relevant to the course.

On speakers and mentors

1. Contact the speakers and mentors for the 2017 course as soon as possible;
2. Continue to invest in high-quality mentors to allow for proper experience-sharing, but also plan for back-up mentors to decrease the dependence on two or three individuals;
3. Provide them the necessary material and instructions in a timely manner to allow for professional preparations;
4. Inform speakers and mentors on the desired message on leadership and peacebuilding;
5. Probe the knowledge of speakers from private sector on peacebuilding;
6. Have business speakers adapt their presentations to the peacebuilding context and make sure their presentations are tailored to the course objectives;
7. Have more speakers with field experience from actual crisis situations, and speakers from the South;
8. Have speakers refer to the relevant learning goals at the start of each session.

On the participants

1. Aim for middle-senior and senior level participants, but allow lower-level participants with relevant experience on a case by case basis;
2. Select participants for individual qualifications and not only for the organization they represent;
3. Aim for qualified participants to represent the variety of actors in the peace sector, and include more community leaders, local and regional actors (EU and OSCE);
4. Consider an incentive to avoid last-minute cancellations of selected participants;
5. Balance the coherence between participants with the right level of diversity to enable the peer-to-peer sharing of experiences;
6. Have participants commit to course fully;
7. Continue to provide scholarships to encourage participation from the South;
8. Consider post-mentoring activities to further strengthen the impact of the course.

On the organization

1. Increase the efficiency of course preparations and implement a pro-active communication approach, including for timely information sharing with participants (reading lists);
2. Implement a sustainable and stable human resource policy in GCSP for the course;
3. Improve the quality of the course report in terms of summarization of participants' feedback;
4. Consolidate the evaluation practice: properly store evaluation forms, record substantive comments from participants during the debriefing and share feedback of participants with partners, mentors and speakers;
5. Develop measurable SMART learning goals as the basis to measure impact;
6. Replace sounding boards by active listening to the participants all resource personnel.

On the budget

1. Agree between HSD and GCSP on the desired budget and division of budget for the SLCP course;
2. Ensure that the cost-efficiency measures do not decrease the quality of the course;
3. Offer proper financial compensation and reimbursement of flights to mentors and speakers and streamline fees of the speakers and mentors;
4. Avoid a course fee to allow participation of developed countries.

6.2 Recommendations on the partnership

On the overall partnership

1. For HSD, to continue sponsoring the course;
2. Brand the SPLC as a joint effort of all partners on any visibility product;
3. Preserve the uniqueness of the SPLC course within the GCSP Programme on Crisis Management and Leadership;
4. Review the added value of UNITAR;
5. Organize each year a timely preparatory meeting with all partners to allow for efficient planning, to agree on course contents and task division, and to plan an appropriate marketing strategy;
6. Have proper debriefings after each course before drafting the course report and share course reports with partners for comments before submitting;
7. Organize a partners' meeting discussing the main findings of this external evaluation.

Partnership between GCSP and Interpeace

1. Continue the partnership between GCSP and Interpeace on the basis of clear agreements;
2. Renegotiate, and where needed clarify, the decision-making process, financial arrangements, organizational timeline and the division of responsibilities;
3. Recognize the need for visibility and input of all partners;
4. Make the different approaches of GCSP and Interpeace really complementary.

Partnership between HSD and GCSP

1. Clarify the intentions of HSD to GCSP for the inclusion of the course budget into the core contribution, and its implications for the course organization;
2. Recognize the need for visibility and accountability of HSD, including in terms of key note speeches by HSD and the inclusion of logos on relevant documents;
3. Better inform resource personnel on the partnership structure and the priorities of the donor;
4. Apply a proactive and efficient approach in terms of consultation and updating;
5. Specify the desired number of scholarships in the Letter of Agreement;
6. Maintain the gender mainstreaming in the course.

6.3 Suggestions for learning event

The outcomes of this external evaluation should form the basis for the future cooperation between the course partners and build a strong foundation to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the course. This report will be the basis for a learning event, held in Geneva early March. The external evaluator will support the learning through a presentation of the evaluation results and recommendations.

The learning event should result in:

- Agreements between all partners
 - if UNITAR should further be involved in the course partnership
 - on consolidation of leadership and peacebuilding concepts
 - on the suitability of speakers for the course
 - on the staff arrangements for the future courses
 - to hold annual joint meetings to strengthen the partnership
 - on marketing strategy and promotion of course
- Agreement between HSD and GCSP on
 - the desired budget of the course
 - the monitoring framework
 - the required visibility for HSD
 - the legal obligation of GCSP to maintain documents
 - the appropriateness of the recurring recommendations in the course report, namely should there be a French version, should the course be organized more often, for a female audience or in peacebuilding countries.
- Agreement between GCSP and Interpeace (possibly leading to a ToR) on
 - Decision-making and division of responsibilities
 - Timeline to prepare the course and for follow-up

The learning event should further allow for open discussions and transparency on the financial construction of the course and the motivations of each partner to continue to invest in the course.