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Ex-Combatants' Choices: Reintegrating Together or Alone – Effects on Political Participation

Case studies from Guatemala, Nepal and Colombia

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1. Executive Summary

This report focuses on the reintegration experiences of ex-combatants from armed groups in Colombia, Guatemala and Nepal. The objective of the report is to contribute new knowledge about how the character of the reintegration process can affect the post-conflict social and political participation of ex-combatants. In Colombia, Guatemala and Nepal some of the ex-combatants from FARC-EP, URNG and PLA respectively reintegrated collectively, whereas others reintegrated individually or together with their spouse or family. Based on fieldwork and interviews, this report analyses and compares the level of social and political participation among the ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively and among those who reintegrated individually – within each country. The three cases are also compared. In addition, the report analyses the transition of the armed groups into political parties and the implications of this for the political participation of the ex-combatants.

The report is based on former and current projects including altogether 153 interviews, of which 105 are with female and 48 with male ex-combatants. Of the total interviews, 57 were conducted in Guatemala, 54 in Nepal and 42 in Colombia. The interviews reveal that collective reintegration increases the social and political participation among ex-combatants and that it is particularly beneficial for the female ex-combatants. One of the explanations for this is that groups who stay together and share a common history and identity simply facilitate the establishment of organizations, committees and working groups among them. Another effect of collective reintegration is that increased gender equality as practiced during the war continues to be practiced within the collectives. However, for collective reintegration to be sustainable over time the report also emphasizes the importance of ownership of land and access to job facilities for the ex-combatants who stay in the collectives.

The interviews also reveal differences in social and political activity among those ex-combatants who reintegrated individually, something that is most clearly observed in the Colombian and Guatemalan cases. Those who reintegrated into urban areas, particularly to large cities like Bogotá and Medellín, have a much higher level of social and political participation than those who reintegrated into rural areas. This can partly be explained by easy access to party headquarters and networks in the larger cities.

The report ends with a series of recommendations. Some of these are targeted at the *UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (IDDRS), because the UN standards do not include collective reintegration as an alternative in the reintegration process of the ex-combatants. The recommendations suggest that collective reintegration should be listed as an alternative in the IDDRS' chapter on reintegration, and furthermore that the strong positive effects of collective reintegration for female ex-combatants should be highlighted. Finally, the recommendations include an encouragement to launch national campaigns against the stigmatization of ex-combatants to facilitate a peaceful and sustainable reintegration process.

2. Introduction

Most peace agreements are formulated with the intention of transforming ex-combatants into socially and politically active persons who can work for their political goals through peaceful means rather than through arms. The *United Nations (UN) Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (IDDRS) emphasizes that "Reintegration [...] should lead to sustainable income, social belonging and political participation" (UN, 2014: 159). However, little has been done to answer how this goal of political participation can be achieved. The literature on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes has highlighted many different aspects of ex-combatants' experiences along the path from war to civilian life. However, literature that focuses on ex-combatants' post-conflict social and political participation is limited. The reintegration process establishes an important platform for ex-combatants' capacity to become socially and politically active. Still, research that examines the relationship between different forms of reintegration and the level of social and political participation is scarce.

This report focuses on the reintegration process and how its character influences the ex-combatants' level of social and political participation. That is, it looks at potential different effects of collective and individual reintegration on the ex-combatants' capacity for social and political participation. The report is based on results from projects with a focus on DDR processes in three countries, Guatemala, Colombia, and Nepal. The timespan between the DDR processes in these three countries adds a dimension of 25 years' historical learning to the organization of DDR processes. The Guatemalan peace agreement between the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) and the government was signed in 1996; the Nepalese peace agreement between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the government in 2006; and the Colombian peace agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) and the government in 2016. The DDR processes in the respective countries began shortly after the signing of the peace agreements. All three countries had many female ex-combatants.

This report also looks at the transformation of the armed groups in Guatemala and Colombia into political parties, how this influenced the ex-combatants' possibilities for political participation, which choices they had, and which alternatives constituted their preferences. Likewise, it looks at the Maoist party in Nepal (CPN-M) and how the ex-combatants from its armed branch, PLA, related to the developments of CPN-M after the war.

3. The UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards

The IDDRS constitutes an important framework of recommendations for how to conduct DDR processes. Although the IDDRS recognizes the importance of collective identity among armed groups, recommended approaches to DDR processes in the IDDRS do not include collective reintegration (UN, 2014: 173). The UN standards divide between "individual reintegration" and "community-based reintegration." According to the UN standards, individual reintegration "provides ex-combatants with specifically designed, individually focused programmes" and community-based reintegration "provides greater inclusion of all actors through the involvement of family members and communities of return in addition to the ex-combatant caseload" (UN, 2014: 160). The IDDRS also makes clear that the aim of the process is "the breakdown of armed groups' command structures" and that in order to break command structures and prevent mid-level commanders from becoming spoilers in DDR processes, "programmes may have to devise specific assistance strategies that better correspond to the profiles and needs of mid-level commanders" (UN, 2014: 161).

There is a certain contradiction between the IDDRS' emphasis on the importance of ex-combatants' collective identity, and the IDDRS' approaches to DDR processes. Rather than suggesting paths that can lead to more collective efforts towards political participation among the ex-combatants, the IDDRS leans towards an individualized focus on the reintegration process. One may ask if by suggesting to give specific advantages to mid-level commanders, the IDDRS will run the risk of creating splits and animosity between rank-and-files and the leaders, and like that introduce a barrier to political participation. The IDDRS in some ways also appear to be a bit outdated, as recent peace agreements and DDR processes have followed a different path than those recommended in the IDDRS.

Despite the IDDRS' lack of focus on collective reintegration as a viable alternative within DDR processes, collective reintegration has already taken place in several countries, for example as early as 1997 in the Guatemalan DDR process. There was also collective reintegration in the Nepalese DDR process, and in Colombia this alternative was even incorporated into the peace agreement itself. The conditions on which the collective reintegration has taken place in each of these three countries differ, as does the degree of socio-economic support the collectively reintegrated in each country have received. Since both individual and collective reintegration have taken place in all three cases, it is possible to compare the effects of the different types of reintegration on the ex-combatants' post-conflict social and political participation.

4. Methodology and Research Questions

This report is based on recent and earlier projects on the DDR processes in Guatemala, Nepal, and Colombia. The projects include a series of altogether 153 interviews with ex-combatants from these countries, some with ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively and some with ex-combatants who reintegrated individually. All projects have a gender dimension. The method used is mainly semi-structured interviews where the interviewees have been identified through the snowball method. The snowball sampling method is a technique where individuals from the studied context recruit future interviewees for the study from among their acquaintances. From this, the sample group is intended to grow like a snowball. This method is argued to be particularly well-suited for use in conflict environments, since it addresses the fears and mistrust normally found in such conflict contexts, and increases the likelihood of trust in the researcher, as she or he becomes introduced through a trusted social network (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). Although it is mainly the snowball method that has been used, the need for a certain gender balance in the selection of interviewees and the need for a balance between the number of collectively and individually reintegrated ex-combatants have played a role in the selection process. This report contains separate analyses of the DDR processes in each of the three cases, including detailed explanations of the methodology used in the projects that each case study is based on.

The main research question in this study is related to the character of the reintegration process. Does it make a difference for the ex-combatants' social and political participation whether they reintegrate collectively or individually and, if so, in which ways? And which role does gender play here? In addition, this study focuses on the transformation of armed groups into political parties and how this affects the ex-combatants' motivation and possibilities for political participation. To answer these main research questions, the report is structured around the following four research questions:

- How does collective reintegration affect ex-combatants' social and political participation?
- How does individual reintegration affect ex-combatants' social and political participation?
- What are the gendered effects of collective and individual reintegration on the ex-combatants' social and political participation?
- How does the transformation of armed groups into political parties influence the ex-combatants' motivation and possibilities for political participation?

5. Guatemala Case Study

5.1. The Conflict and the Armed Actors

The Guatemalan conflict broke out in 1960 and was brought to an end with the peace agreement between the government and the URNG signed in December 1996. The main character of the 36-year-long civil war was that it was fought between a relatively small guerrilla force and a strongly superior military force. It was extremely bloody in the period 1980–83, when the army carried out its major counter-insurgency campaign and slaughtered large numbers of the Indigenous population in the western and central highlands. Among the insurgency movement's prioritized goals were socio-economic equality, land reform, democratization and human rights.

The armed actors in Guatemala consisted of the URNG, constituted by four different guerrilla organizations – the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP); the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR); the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA); and the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT), which joined forces in 1982, under the umbrella of the URNG. On the other side, there was the army/government and groups linked to the counter-insurgency warfare. These groups include the so-called civil defence patrols (PACs), which were founded in 1981 and were organized and controlled by the army. A considerable number of Indigenous men were forced to join the PACs. Finally, there were several paramilitary groups that operated during the war.

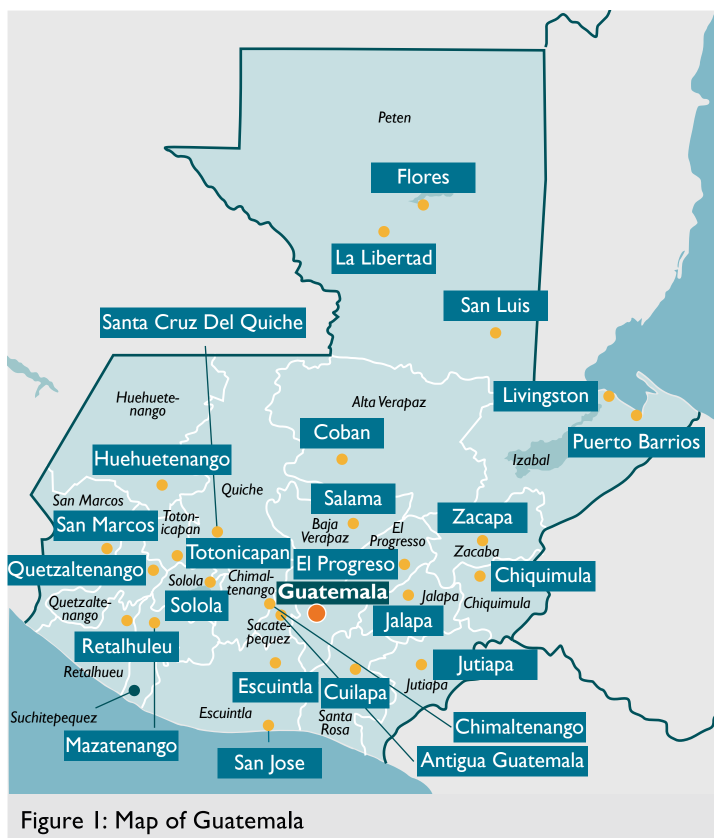

Figure 1: Map of Guatemala

5.2. The Demobilization Process

The peace accord signed in 1996 stated that the URNG should be disarmed and demobilized within 60 days of the signing of the final peace agreement. The demobilization phase was set to last 60 days, and the main phase of the reintegration of the URNG as a legal entity was set for one year, starting immediately after the 60 days of demobilization (Universidad Rafael Landivar y MINUGUA, 1997). The agreement further contained a comprehensive set of measures in the juridical, security, social and economic fields to assist this process.

The peace accord stated that a special commission should be established to coordinate the work on programmes related to the reintegration of the URNG into legality. This commission should be made up of an equal number of representatives from the URNG and the government, and with representatives from donors and international organizations. This commission – the Special Commission for Reintegration (CEI) – was established on 18 December 1997. The peace agreement gave the commission a mandate to reach compromises with regard to financing the different programs and projects (Universidad Rafael Landivar y MINUGUA, 1997). When the CEI was closed down in 1998, a new coordinating mechanism, ECO (*equipo de coordinación*, or coordination team), was established, composed of members from the URNG, the government and the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), to take responsibility for the remaining part of the reintegration process. In addition, the peace accord stated that the URNG should establish its own foundation responsible for project implementation, which it did through the organization of the Fundación Guillermo Toriello (FGT). Altogether 2,928 URNG members were demobilized, and of these 766 were women (FGT, 2006). The majority of demobilized combatants reintegrated individually in Guatemala City or in rural communities in 15 different departments of the country. However, towards the end of the reintegration period, there was one particular group of ex-combatants with long personal histories as guerrilla members who expressed a strong preference for collective reintegration and who also lacked communities to go back to. This group consisted of 355 persons (CEI, 1998: 8). For them, three farms (*fincas*) were bought, although at unfavourable economic conditions, which later would leave these ex-combatants with a high debt on the land; El Horizonte in Petén; Las Tecas in Suchitepequez; and Santa Anita in Quetzaltenango. In addition, a larger area of land was bought in Chimaltenango for the construction of houses for another group of URNG ex-combatants (Hauge and Thoresen, 2007).

5.3. Reintegrating Together or Alone – The Social Basis

The experiences from the collective and individual reintegration in this case study of Guatemala is based on two former research projects[1] and include altogether 57 interviews with ex-combatants (47 female and 10 male interviewees). Of the 57 interviewees, 27 reintegrated collectively and 29 individually. In addition to the 57 interviews from the two former projects, a few recent interviews with ex-combatants were carried out in October-–December 2021 to update the information on the cooperatives and on the political participation of the ex-combatants.

In general, the interviews showed that many of those who reintegrated individually ended up relying on family support for survival. The international support for micro-enterprises was to a large degree a failure and the idea of converting *guerrilleros* into entrepreneurs with a minimum of support did not prove to work. Job opportunities and support for further education would have required more appropriate means of support for many of the ex-combatants.

The ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively in general managed better than those who reintegrated individually, as they were able to initiate several new projects, for example coffee production, forestry and cattle raising. This gave some income and contributed to their life sustenance. However, some of the international donors' projects, particularly USAID's, were geared towards individual reintegration, and the negative attitude of USAID and the Guatemalan government to collective reintegration made the process difficult for those who wanted to reintegrate together (Hauge and Thoresen, 2007). A serious problem for those who reintegrated collectively was that they became heavily indebted, as the land they were offered had been negotiated under disadvantageous conditions. As an example, the debt of El Horizonte in 2007 stood at 7 million quetzales or about US$1 million.

Box 1. The DDR Process in Guatemala in Figures

- **Total number of demobilized:** 2,928
- **Female ex-combatants:** 766
- **Male ex-combatants:** 2,216

Collective Reintegration

- **Number of collectively reintegrated:** 355
- **Of these:** 109 females and 246 males

Three farms were bought for those ex-combatants who wanted to reintegrate collectively:

- El Horizonte in Petén
- Santa Anita in Quetzaltenango
- Las Tecas in Suchitepequez

The ex-combatants own the land of the farms, but the land had been offered them on unfavorable conditions, and the ex-combatants in these three farms became heavily indebted. In addition, an area of land was bought mainly for the construction of houses for a group of ex-combatants who wanted to reintegrate together in Chimaltenango.

Sources: FGT, 2006; CEI, 1998

Despite these problems, the ex-combatants in the cooperatives revealed greater capacity for social organization and social participation than those who reintegrated individually. The community of URNG ex-combatants in Chimaltenango, for example, became well organized with its own committees for health, education and youth activities and engaged in cooperation with surrounding communities through the local development councils (Comité Comunitario de Desarollo (COCODES).[2]

The URNG had many female fighters. The character of the demobilization and reintegration process influenced the Guatemalan female ex-combatants' abilities for social and political participation considerably. The choice of collective or individual reintegration had many social implications. The female fighters reintegrated back into a Guatemalan society characterized by macho attitudes and traditional gender relations and by a high level of violence against women. Whereas the majority of the demobilized female ex-combatants reintegrated individually in Guatemala City and in rural communities in 15 different departments (counties) of the country, 109 of the women chose to reintegrate in the farms El Horizonte in Petén; Las Tecas in Suchitepequez; Santa Anita in Quetzaltenango and in the community of ex-combatants in Chimaltenango (CEI, 1998: 8). One of the consequences of the collective reintegration was that several women became proprietors of land. This is not common in Guatemala, where most women only have the choice to become co-proprietors of land together with their husband. In the three farms, El Horizonte, Santa Anita and Las Tecas, the women had their own titles and rights to the land. A URNG survey from 1997 showed that before the demobilization, only 79 women reported to have owned land, whereas with the acquisition of the farms and the collective reintegration, this figure increased to 142 women (FGT, 2006: 112). The women who reintegrated in the three farms participated in different and less gender traditional types of work than the women who reintegrated individually in urban areas. Their occupations included forestry, cattle, honey production and agriculture. The interviewed female ex-combatants from the cooperatives expressed that the gender roles and dynamics in the cooperatives were good, and that they felt respected and participated in different forms of work and social activities along with the men. Some of them had leading roles in the cooperatives and were also active in local politics.

In comparison, the women who reintegrated individually reported that they felt that their husbands were slipping back into the traditional gender roles and attitudes of the Guatemalan society. In addition, women living in Guatemala City and in other larger towns were anxious about leaving the house to go to political meetings in the evenings, because of the high level of violence against women (Hauge, 2008). These women also lacked arrangements to look after their children, making it hard for them to participate socially and politically. The collective reintegration thus had many different and cumulatively positive effects. In the cooperatives, the demobilized female fighters naturally became members of the organizational structures, such as the junta directiva (the board or leadership) of the cooperative and in the many committees they established, such as the women's committee, the youth committee, the health committee, etc. In addition, the cooperatives also became involved in the work of the local development councils (COCODES),

and in several of these activities, women were the most active. In Chimaltenango women took a lead role: COCODES was (at the time of the interviews in 2007–08) headed by a woman, as were most of the other committees in the community (Interviews). Other factors that facilitated the female ex-combatants social and political participation were that they had childcare arrangements and were spared for the daily fear of crime and violence against women that for example the women who reintegrated in Guatemala City had to sustain. In general, the female ex-combatants who stayed in the cooperatives felt safe and protected within their community, as the cooperatives also had organized their own security guards.[3] Among the collectively reintegrated, the gender equality practised by the guerrillas during the war continued to function and create positive dynamics. The women in the Chimaltenango community were particularly active both socially and in the local development councils.

5.4. Recent Developments

From a long-term perspective, the collective reintegration cites – including the three farms with cooperatives and the community of ex-combatants in Chimaltenango – have showed resilience. In 2021, 25 years after the peace agreement in Guatemala was signed, they all still exist, although some of the collectives have fewer ex-combatants living there and less socio-economic activity than earlier (Interview). Currently (in 2021) about 90 families live in El Horizonte, 80 families in Santa Anita, 70 families in Las Tecas and 90 families in Chimaltenango. In the three farms, mainly the ex-combatants with their extended families live, whereas in Chimaltenango non-ex-combatants have also settled together with the ex-combatants.

However, the cooperatives have faced many problems and challenges, particularly the burden of debt service on the land they bought. The cooperative in El Horizonte in Petén is doing well. This cooperative has its own primary and secondary school, a health center and a war museum. They have common agricultural production, fish farming and tourism projects. El Horizonte has been able to develop the chain from agricultural and fish production to the use and sale of these products both within and outside the *finca*, for example in their own cafeteria, which is open to the public. El Horizonte is the only cooperative that has been able to finish the debt service on its land. The last debt-payment was made in 2020. Owning the farm, the ex-combatants in El Horizonte can now strengthen and expand their socio-economic activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the health center in El Horizonte also cooperated with the health center in Santa Anita. El Horizonte has a female president and there are also female members in the board of the cooperative. The women in El Horizonte have a strong influence over the life in the cooperative and they also organize activities for women in the neighbouring communities and support the women there with economic projects and activities.

In the farm Santa Anita, production of coffee is the main activity, although the ex-combatants in this cooperative do also have other projects such as eco-tourism, and they have their own

war museum like in El Horizonte. The coffee production in Santa Anita has been very successful and the women are strongly involved in the production, distribution, marketing, and sale of the coffee. The coffee from Santa Anita is well known, has a good reputation and is also exported. Despite the success with the coffee growing, the ex-combatants in Santa Anita are still struggling with the debt service on their land.

The cooperative in Las Tecas has had more problems, and the ex-combatants there are also still servicing the debt on the land they are cultivating. Las Tecas has some cultivation of pineapple, but in this *finca* the situation is quite different from the other ones. The ex-combatants in this cooperative decided to split up the land and distribute it among them. They all now have their own little piece of land that they cultivate. Las Tecas has also had some problems with landowners from the landed elite in the area, as this cooperative is located closer to the area of the big "finqueros" (landed elite) than the other ones.

The community in Chimaltenango do have some common agricultural production, such as mushrooms, but they also have small plots where each family can grow some corn. Chimaltenango has much interaction with surrounding communities, particularly with the municipality of Zaragosa.

5.5. The Transformation of the URNG into a Political Party

Among the politically active ex-combatants from the URNG, not all supported the newly established political party URNG. The ex-combatants also established other new parties and supported existing parties on the left. Many of the ex-combatants joined protest organizations, particularly those that protested against mining activity in Guatemala. To understand the splits between the ex-combatants and the new political loyalties among them, it is necessary to look at what happened during the transformation of the URNG into a political party.

In 1997, the URNG made the decision to establish one integrated structure and thereby to dissolve the four groups that constituted the organization (EGP, FAR, ORPA and PGT). This decision came into effect in February 1997. Following the legal requirements for the constitution of a political party, a promoting group of 100 persons initiated the process of legalization in June the same year and elected a provisional board of directors (*Junta Directiva*). The URNG was finally recognized as a political party in December 1998, two years after the signing of the peace accord (Sinchar, 1999: 89). One of the first obstacles the URNG leaders met when they decided to register as a political party was to gather enough signatures from their supporters. The legal requirement in 1996 was for at least 2,000 signatures from supporters with identity papers. The URNG finally registered with 4,162 signatures (Interview with leader of FAR Pablo Monsanto). The identity papers and the registration process were problematic for many ex-combatants, as they had to go through a costly and bureaucratic process, and because they had other and more pressing

social and economic needs to look to first. In addition, a political party was only accepted as a national organization if it had a presence in 50 municipalities (with a minimum of 15 members in each) in no less than 12 departments of the country. This required an enormous organizational effort on the part of a group that so recently had been living in a clandestine situation and lacked experience in dealing with the legal system.

In the process of becoming established as a political party, the URNG had to follow normal procedures in a situation that was not normal. This process is described as long and costly by the participants, and the URNG ended up spending most of its available economic resources on this process. The URNG did not have many sources of income. Its deputies committed themselves to give 30 percent of their salaries to the party, which represented the most important source of income even if they only had two deputies (Interview with URNG Congress representative Alba Estela Maldonado). In addition, the URNG received support for specific events like seminars. The party was also entitled to 2 quetzales (US$ 0.30) per vote in presidential elections. During the elections in 2007, a small Mexican party, Partido del Trabajo (PT), offered the URNG assistance with propaganda. The differences between the financing resources of the URNG and the Alliance of the New Nation (ANN), on one side, and those of the established political parties, like the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), on the other, were large. It is estimated that the political parties spent 437 million quetzales (US$ 60.4 million) on the campaign in 2003, and at least 50 percent of this on propaganda (Mirador Electoral, 2003a; 2003b). Of the funds used for advertising in mass media, 89.2 percent was spent by the five traditional conservative parties. According to the URNG's own estimate, their electoral campaign expenditure in 2003 was of 5 million quetzales (US$ 700,000).

In addition to this, they had to struggle with the problem of clientelism. In ex-ORPA Commander Rodrigo Asturias'[4] words during the election campaign "the state was there, buying votes, offering positions" (Interview with Asturias). Quiché was mentioned by several of those interviewed as a province in which the buying of votes took place along with the use of other factors, such as threats and fear. "Having been subject to 35 years of psychological warfare also leaves traces" (Interview with Asturias). Lack of economic resources has many consequences, such as not being able to assure candidates adequate coverage in the mass media.[5] Another consequence was that the URNG could not offer its supporters payment for services during the election campaign. Some of those interviewed emphasized that when people in Guatemala come to a meeting they expect a meal, or at least that their bus tickets will be paid. The URNG did not have the economic resources to offer this (Interviews). However, external conditions alone did not determine the URNG's success as a political party. This must also be seen in light of their own strategy and priorities.

The URNG had problems developing organizational unity. In 1999, the URNG participated in the elections as a part of the ANN. However, increasing tension within the URNG became evident in the second National Assembly in August 2001. Two competing tendencies were not able

to reach a compromise and in the internal elections ex-EGP members and ex-ORPA members gained, while the so-called revolutionary tendency led by ex-FAR members was left without participation on the board of the party. After that the revolutionary tendency split and prior to the elections in 2003 helped to establish the ANN as a political party participating independently in the electoral process. Generally, the leadership of the URNG was better developed in military and political–diplomatic work and less in work with the social organizations and the "masses", although to a certain degree it relied on their support during the war. It had difficulties in changing its relationship with organizations in the social movement during the war into a new strategic relationship as a political party in peacetime. In hindsight, reflecting on this, some of its leaders have realized that one should have looked for more opportunities "to use the political work as a social movement work" (Interview with Alba Estela Maldonado; Monroy, 2005). However, the question of involving social organizations in political work has not been easy, particularly as the public does not have much trust in political parties in Guatemala and blames them for much of what went wrong in the past (Interviews).

Shortly after demobilization, there was more support for the URNG among its grassroots members, but later many of those interviewed found it more useful to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Frente por la Vida y la Paz, which exerted pressure on the state to fulfil its responsibilities in the peace accord and protested against mining activities by international companies and against the free-trade agreement (TLC) (Interviews). Petén is the area where the guerrilla organization FAR mainly operated during the war and, despite frustrations with their leaders, many of those interviewed in Petén said that they voted for and supported the ANN. However, they expressed strong discontent over the split in the URNG (Monroy, 2005).

Box 2. The 1999 and 2003 Elections in Guatemala

In the 1999 elections, the URNG-supported alliance received 270,891 votes (12.36 percent) in the presidential election and 233,870 votes (11.04 percent) in the parliamentary election on the national list. In 2003, when URNG participated without an alliance, the result was 2.56 percent of the votes for president and 4.2 percent of the votes for the national list for deputies to Congress.

The URNG almost disappeared as a legal political party. However, if the votes for the ANN were taken into account, the total number of votes for these two left-wings parties to the Congress is similar to the 1999 results (231,129).[6]

Sources: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, 1999; 2003

5.6. Politically Active Ex-combatants 25 years after the Peace Agreement

Currently, the areas where ex-combatants who live in cooperatives, collectives, and communities are most visibly socially and politically active are Petén, Chimaltenango, la Costa Sur, Quetzaltenango, Ixcán and Quiché, Sololá, Retalhuleu, and in some regions of Huehuetenango (FGT, 2016: 159; Interviews). These are ex-combatants with their children and families involved in the battle for socio-economic changes and a functioning democracy, active in local and national politics and in social organizations.

The ex-combatants of El Horizonte are politically active, particularly in local politics. They also participate in social movements. This is also the case for the ex-combatants in Santa Anita. The female ex-combatants in Santa Anita are involved in establishing alliances of women in politics. The ex-combatants in Las Tecas seem to be less politically active, whereas the population of the community in Chimaltenango also are politically active, particularly in local politics.

With regard to political parties, some, although fewer than during the first decade after the peace agreement, are members of URNG-MAIZ, others support Convergencia-CPO, yet others UNE and Nueva República (FGT, 2016: 161; Interviews). However, many are involved in social organizations, and there has been an increase in local social organizations in Guatemala since the peace agreement was signed. A particularly important organization, in which many ex-combatants are currently active, is the Committee for the Development of Peasants (CODECA) (Interviews). The constituencies of CODECA include peasant and indigenous committees, daily workers, landless people, and women's groups. Many ex-combatants are also active in local development councils. Some of the cooperatives have been particularly active in their nearby local development councils, or COCODES, particularly El Horizonte in Petén and the community of ex-combatants in Chimaltenango. In an interview with FGT, one ex-combatant expressed his thoughts on the ex-combatants' efforts in the development councils this this way:

> *"We think we have gone beyond the vision of reincorporation as an operative process, which was the prevailing view. We gave the process a vision with more focus on political and conceptual ideas. We have focused on strengthening local power, working with the Law on the (Development) Councils, and we have reached out through a vision of inclusivity, working with the communities rather than only with compañeros. There are also efforts to build on common experiences from the past at the municipal level. The memories and the memory unite us." (FGT, 2016:165).*[7]

The Guatemalan development councils originated in the process of state decentralization that began in the 1970s. Since that time the tasks and the structure of the development councils have changed. In 1985, the urban and rural development councils were institutionalized as they became included in the Constitution and were charged with formulating development policy and

accommodating participation for the Maya, Xinca, Garífuna, and non-indigenous population in the conduct of public affairs and development planning. These councils exist at five levels: the national level (CONADES); the regional level (COREDES); the departmental level (CODEDES); the municipal level COMUDES); and the community level (COCODES). The key actors in the development councils are the state, with representatives both from the executive and the municipal governments, and civil society, including groups representing the grassroots, women, indigenous peoples, intellectuals, and the business sector (also small- and medium-sized businesses).

The ex-combatants who reintegrated individually and went back to their local communities in rural areas have not fared so well. They went back to very small plots of land, so-called *minifundios*, to live there with their families. This group constitutes the majority of the ex-combatants who participated in the DDR process. They reintegrated back into poverty and in general they express discontent with the DDR process. Ex-combatants from this group are in particular found in the highlands and in Alta and Baja Verapaz: In an interview with FGT, one ex-combatant expressed it this way:

> *"It is very difficult with the small plots of family land, because even if the land is productive, money investment and working hours are not compensated. Our peasant compañeros who reincorporated into these marginalized rural areas are thus very poor. Economic hardship makes the participation in meetings and political activity very difficult, and there is no economic support available to take part in such activities. Some compañeros have even given up on establishing a family, because they would not be able to feed their family members." (FGT, 2016: 152)*[8]

For many families in this category of ex-combatants, poverty has become so extreme and life so difficult that they have seen no other possibility than to migrate to the United States. Thus, many of these families of ex-combatants have a member who has migrated (FGT, 2016: 153). Several of the ex-combatants have also had post-traumatic problems and some of them have become victims of alcoholism and drug abuse, as there has been no adequate psychological treatment available to them (Interview).

5.7. Summary of the Case Study of Guatemala

In December 2021, 25 years had passed since the Guatemalan government and the URNG signed a peace agreement. In this chapter on Guatemala, a line has been drawn from early studies of the DDR process and ex-combatants' early social and political activity until December 2021, with interviews and updates of the current social and political activism among the ex-combatants in Guatemala.

The early studies reveal that ex-combatants who reintegrated alone, or went back to their family, often had problems finding a job that could give them a sufficient income. The socio-economic

support given them as part of the reintegration process was very small and short-lasting, and the skills courses offered to them were not adapted to the contexts that the ex-combatants lived in. Some also felt that they had to conceal their guerrilla identity for fear of stigmatization or persecution. Female ex-combatants living alone or with their family often felt insecure because of the high level of violence against women in Guatemala. For these reasons, most of the ex-combatants who reintegrated individually were not particularly socially or politically active, and especially not the women.

For the ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively into different types of cooperatives, the early studies show a much different situation. Although the land they were offered was bought under unfavourable conditions, and the ex-combatants living there thus became heavily indebted, these ex-combatants were able to start up many types of productive projects with sufficient income to live on. There were many types of social activities in the cooperatives and gender equality was emphasized. Women became leaders of many councils and committees. The ex-combatants from the cooperatives were in general active in local politics and in the many local development councils. As the cooperatives had their own security guards, women felt safe and were also escorted to political meetings outside of the cooperatives by their fellow ex-combatants.

Recent interviews and update information from 2021 confirm many of the tendencies revealed in the early studies, but they also highlight some nuances and some new findings. With regard to those who reintegrated individually, some of those who settled in urban areas have achieved meaningful jobs in human rights and development organizations. This has given them some social and political influence. However, the majority of those URNG members who entered the guerrilla as marginalized peasants and returned to their local communities to stay with their family after the demobilization, are very poor and with very little capacity for social and political activity. This group constitutes the majority of the ex-combatants.

The ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively have in general fared better socio-economically and have been more active socially and politically than those who reintegrated individually – although mainly in local politics, in the development councils and some in social movements. All the cooperatives that were established in 1997 still exist, and the largest cooperative, El Horizonte in Petén, has been the most resilient and has been able to pay down its debt on the land. The other cooperatives are still indebted. There is considerable activity in terms of projects and agricultural production in the cooperatives and women are particularly active and in leading roles in several of the cooperatives. They have also engaged women outside of the cooperatives and have cooperated with women's organizations and networks in Guatemala to improve women's situation.

In general – among those of the ex-combatants who have been politically active – their support has mainly been for political parties like URNG-MAIZ, ANN, Convergencia-CPO, and UNE, and

most of their political involvement has been at the local level. On the other hand, there has been considerable support for political movements like CODECA among the ex-combatants. The preference for social and political movements is caused largely by too many splits within the political parties on the left and the generally low confidence in political parties in Guatemala.

The lesson from the Guatemalan case is that collective reintegration facilitates social and political activity among ex-combatants. However, it is important how the long-term sustainability of the ex-combatants' cooperatives are planned for – that is – under which conditions the collective land is acquired. To be able to live from the land and have capacity to engage in social and political activities over time, the socio-economic conditions of the cooperatives must be reasonable. Finally, it is important where the land properties of the cooperatives are located. The group of ex-combatants that opted for collective reintegration in Guatemala was relatively small, but the possibility to observe this group over time reveals that the cooperatives have been resilient, that the ex-combatants in the cooperatives are still socially and politically active, and that **this type of reintegration has been particularly good for female ex-combatants**.

6. Nepal Case Study

6.1. The Conflict and the Armed Actors

The Nepalese civil war broke out in 1996 and came to an end in November 2006 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-M) and the government (Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Nepal, 2006). This marked the end of a war fought between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (the armed branch of CPN-M) and the Nepalese Army. The war was based on a serious of popular uprisings against centuries of monarchy and the grievances this had given rise to for large parts of the population of Nepal in terms of socio-economic inequality, discrimination, landlessness, and lack of democracy (Riaz and Basu, 2007).

Elections for a Constituent Assembly (CA) were held in 2008, two years after the peace agreement was signed. The first meeting in the Constituent Assembly took place on 28 May 2008, and during this meeting the CA declared Nepal a federal democratic republic and abolished centuries of monarchy headed by the Shaha kings. The CPN-M became the largest party in the new Constituent Assembly.

6.2. The Demobilization Process

In addition to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between CPN-M and the government signed in 2006, the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA) was signed on 8 December 2006. (Government of Nepal, 2007). The government also established a Special Committee (SC) for Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army

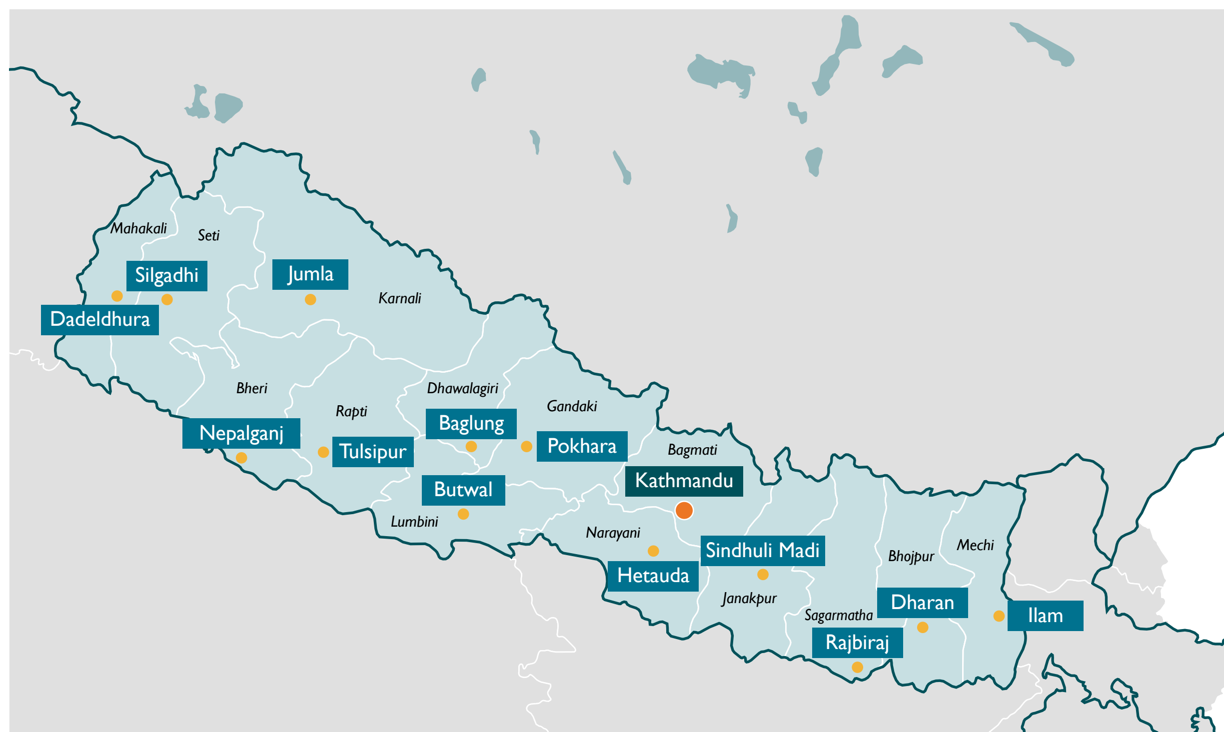

Figure 2: Map of Nepal

Combatants. At the initial process of registration in 2007, a total of 32,250 Maoist ex-combatants were registered (Robins and Bhandari, 2016). However, 8,636 of these did not show up later for the verification process.[9] The verification process was conducted by the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). In this process it was decided whom of the registered would "qualify" for socio-economic compensation and whom would be "disqualified." Thus, 23,610 PLA members went through the verification process. Of these, 19,602 were labelled "qualified ex-combatants" by UNMIN, and of these again 15,756 (80.37 percent) were male, and 3,846 (19.63 percent) were female (Ibid). In total 4,008 ex-combatants were disqualified by UNMIN – in Nepali language, they were labelled *ayoga*: literally, "unqualified" (Robins and Bhandari, 2016: 16). Of these, 2,791 were female and 2,973 were male.

Box 3. The DDR Process in Nepal in Figures

Registered Ex-Combatants

- Total number of initially registered ex-combatants: 32,250

Verified Ex-Combatants

- Total number of verified ex-combatants: 23,610
- Did not show up for verification: 8,636

Qualified Ex-Combatants

- Total number of qualified ex-combatants: 19,602
- Total number of disqualified ex-combatants: 4,008

The Gender Dimension

- Of the qualified ex-combatants: 15,756 males and 3,846 females
- Of the disqualified ex-combatants: 2,791 females and 2,973 males

Source: Robins and Bhandari, 2016

The reasons given for their disqualification were that they were minors or/and late recruits. After some time, the UN realized that the term "disqualified" had a stigmatizing effect and began applying the more technical term "verified minors and late recruits" (VMLR) (Robins and

Bhandari, 2016). Of the 4,008 ex-combatants that were disqualified, 2,973 were "verified minors" and 1,035 were identified as "late recruits" (recruited after the signing of the peace agreement) (Ibid). The options given to the qualified ex-combatants were the following: a) Integration into Nepal's army, b) Voluntary retirement including cash compensation (a one-off cash payment of between 500–600 000 Nepalese Rupees NPR), and c) Rehabilitation, including educational support and possibilities for vocational training.

When the verification process was completed, the ex-combatants were placed in seven main and 21 satellite cantonments in different parts of the country. However, many of the disqualified ex-combatants were also initially placed in the cantonments together with the qualified. The disqualified were later discharged from the cantonments, but several of them stayed as long as three to four years in the cantonments before they were discharged. The DDR process had originally been planned to take place within a timeframe of six months, but it took more than six years to complete the process. Although the 28 cantonments in Nepal were formally closed six years after the peace agreement, around 20 of them still have PLA ex-combatants living in these areas. Mostly they have bought land there, as land in these areas close to the jungle and mountain areas is cheaper than in the more densely populated areas in Nepal.

6.3. Reintegrating Together or Alone – The Social Basis

The experiences from the collective and individual reintegration in this section on Nepal is based on two former research projects[10] and include altogether 54 interviews with ex-combatants (39 female and 15 male interviewees). Of the 54 ex-combatants, 23 live in Chitwan and 31 in the Western Hills, Kathmandu, and some other small cities, as these reintegrated individually. Of the 54 interviewees, 25 were formerly minors. However, the minors had all turned 18 years or older by the time they were interviewed.

The special feature of the Nepali DDR process is that all ex-combatants – also many of the disqualified – spent at least three years together in the cantonments and many spent up to six years. During this time an important socialization process in peacetime took place and, in this way, most of them acquired a certain social basis and experiences of living together in peacetime. In addition, minors who later would be discharged from the cantonments and sent home first spent about three years in the cantonments. However, there are also some negative aspects of the way life in the cantonments in Nepal was organized, particularly regarding the lack of gender equality. Pregnant women were placed in houses outside of the cantonments and in that way were excluded from the socialization process and missed out on possibilities for the skills courses that were given in the cantonments.

After their time in the cantonments, many ex-combatants continued to live together, often in areas close to where the cantonments had been located, for example in Chitwan, near the Musuriya

cantonment in Kailali district and near Jhaltundada cantonment in Kawaswati, Rupandhi district. This had some important additional social implications, as it helped the most vulnerable among the demobilized to manage life socio-economically, to participate in social activities, and to adapt to a new life together with their fellow ex-combatants. The 23 interviewees referred to in this section on Nepal as 'collectively reintegrated' were living together in Shaktikor, Chitwan. This had been a main cantonment site of the CPN-M during the peace process period. In Shaktikor, Nepal's government had organized a farewell program dissolving all the cantonments in the presence of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and the CPN (Maoist) supreme commander "Prachanda" along-side national level political players and government officials. This means that the history of the place was also important for the study.

Almost all of the ex-combatants who reintegrated in Chitwan bought a small piece of land and built a home. This was possible as the majority of those living in Chitwan were qualified ex-combatants who had received their one-off cash payment as part of the Voluntary retirement

Box 4. Collective Reintegration in Nepal

The Cantonments

- In Nepal, the ex-combatants were gathered in seven main and 21 satellite cantonments in different parts of the country.

- There was no formalized collective reintegration in Nepal, but the long time spent in the cantonments is comparable to some kind of medium-term collective reintegration.

The disqualified: Many of the disqualified ex-combatants stayed about three years in the cantonments before they were discharged.

The qualified: Many of the qualified ex-combatants stayed up to six years in the cantonments.

The Closure of the Cantonments

- The 28 cantonments were formally closed in 2012, but about 20 of them still have ex-combatants living around or close to them. These are the ex-combatants who chose to reintegrate collectively – that is, in this case, to continue to stay together. Many of them bought cheap land in these remotely located areas.

Sources: Robins and Bhandari, 2016; interviews

package offered in the reintegration program. Several ex-combatants in Chitwan managed to get involved in economic activities by their own means. However, it was difficult for them to cover the regular costs. To cover these costs, some borrowed from their fellow ex-combatants or from neighbors and some approached financial institutions (if they were not able to achieve assistance at the local level) (Interviews). One participant said: "Most of the PLA members have been living here, so whenever I need financial and social help, I first ask them. If they are not able to support me, then I go to the neighbor" (Interview). Another participant said, "I am a member of some groups. I borrow from these groups when I need to" (Interview). Yet another participant expressed, "I borrowed from my friends and relatives, but I did not take up any loan from the bank" (Interview). Many of the female ex-combatants in Chitwan experienced that their husbands went abroad in search for a job. Despite this difficult situation, most of the female-headed households in Chitwan managed with the solidary and help from fellow ex-combatants and friends living in the area. Thus, it was also particularly important for the female ex-combatants to reintegrate collectively.

The character of the collective living area in Chitwan facilitated social participation. All the interviewees were socially active in one way or another. Within the area, there were also many smaller organizations where the ex-combatants worked on common issues. Examples of these are: Bahuchetana Samudayek Sastha (an organization that focuses on awareness raising), Tole Sudhar Samiti (an organization that focuses on the overall development of the village), the Women's Mediation Committee, Barpapal Mahila Samuha, and Nayakalagi Dondapidit Samaj (an organization formed to advocate for justice).

The interviewed female ex-combatants in Chitwan also frequently referred to interaction with people in neighboring local communities and to challenges with how to keep their new-won freedoms and self-confidence while at the same time not insulting, but rather building peace with their more gender -traditional neighbors. In general, the ex-combatants experienced a clash between their own wartime culture and the culture in the communities. The ex-combatants had developed their own culture free of caste class and gender discrimination during the war – even including a wedding ceremony that was equal for people of all castes – and they had adapted their clothing to the context of warfare.[11] They had experienced the war-culture as freer and more open in many ways. Thus, the ex-combatants met several cultural challenges when they reintegrated. One female ex-combatant said the following:

> *"In the beginning when I started to live in the society, I felt uneasy because my wartime clothing was different from that of the community people. The clothes that I wore during the war were the paints and the t-shirt. The village women wear the Saree Cholo[12] and some other wear Kurtha Salawar[13] I felt uncomfortable to wear the Kurtha Salwar during the war. The living style in the cantonments and those of the local people were also different. Sometimes I wore the usual cantonment dress, shorts, and sometimes long*

shorts, as I felt it comfortable. I know very well that how to dress is a personal choice. However, again I thought that now that I am living in the community then I must respect the practices of the local people. When I used to go to the market during the war, wearing wartime clothing, then sometimes I worried about the community people and if they would think differently about this. Later I decided to change my clothing and dress like the women in the community. It helped me to increase good relationships with the villagers."[14]

There was a marked difference between those of the interviewees who lived together in Chitwan and those who reintegrated alone or together with their husbands in Kathmandu or the Western Hills (altogether 31 interviewees). First, there were many disqualified in the latter group, and these ex-combatants fared worse economically, as they did not receive the cash compensation. The division of ex-combatants into qualified and disqualified resulted in marked differences in economic compensation and socio-economic opportunities as well as in access to the Maoist network for support, employment facilities, and political activities. When the disqualified became discharged from the cantonments, many of them left without any economic compensation and they returned home to their local communities and villages, as they did not have any economic resources with which to start a new life on their own. Some of the female ex-combatants who reintegrated individually also had husbands who had left for the Middle East in search for work. As these female ex-combatants lived far away from other ex-combatants, they could not seek economic help from their peers, as was frequently done by the women in Chitwan.

Among the ex-combatants who reintegrated individually were some couples who had entered into inter-caste marriages while with the PLA during the war. The mixed-caste couples who reintegrated individually suffered a lot, as they were strongly discriminated against and disrespected in their local communities. In contrast, those inter-caste couples who reintegrated collectively were highly respected by their fellow PLA ex-combatants.

Only ten of those 31 who reintegrated individually were socially active. Most of the minors who were sent back to their home communities for reintegration were not socially active, as they were highly stigmatized and often harassed. Those adult ex-combatants who reintegrated individually and were socially active had initiated some projects in their village and were therefore socially accepted or had joined an international NGO to have some network. A few lived in Maoist-friendly areas, which also made it easier for them to be socially active.

6.4. The CPN-M's Trajectory and Post-conflict Political Work

Contrary to the Guatemalan context, where the political party, URNG, was established based on the four former guerrilla groups, the Maoists in Nepal already had a well-functioning political party, and the PLA was the armed branch of this party, established for guerrilla warfare. Thus, while the PLA was dissolved during the DDR process, the CPN-Maoist party continued to exist.

Most of the post-independence period of Nepal has been characterized by a strong monarchy, but with several efforts from opposition groups to introduce parliamentary democracy. Although opposition groups during some periods succeeded with the introduction of parliamentary democracy, several times the monarchy afterwards re-established its absolute power (Riaz and Basu, 2007). In this history of the fight for democracy and abolishment of the monarchy, the history of the development of the communist party/parties in Nepal and the different splits within and between them based on ideology and strategy also belongs. There was a call for coordination among communist revolutionaries in 1974, and in December 1978 they established the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist–Leninist) (CPN (M-L). Since 1974, the Maoists had also sought to form a viable political party based on a programmatic unity. Diverging from the Marxists on the issue of insurrection, the Maoists sought to develop a wider popular movement against the monarchical regime with the aim of transforming the movement into an open armed insurrection. However, the Maoists also had many internal splits over disagreement on ideology and strategy (Riaz and Basu, 2007). Finally, in 1995, after a period of strong government repression, the CPN Maoists (M) under the leadership of Prachanda, decided on the policy of protracted war.

The establishment of a new Constitution was the next important step after the peace process in Nepal. Elections for the Constituent Assembly were held twice, first in 2008 and then in 2013. This happened as the CA, elected in 2008, failed to draft a constitution within its tenure of four years. This CA was dissolved in 2012 and a new one elected in 2013. A new Constitution was finally promulgated on 20 September 2015.

The CPN-M joined an interim government in January 2007, and in this way the party was brought into the political mainstream. In August 2008, Maoist leader Puspha Kamal Dahal, also known as Prachanda, was elected Prime Minister. However, he stepped down on 4 May 2009, following a row with the president over the sacking of the army chief. After September 2009, there were several internal splits within the CPN-M and some different fractions also merged. Then, in 2016, the Maoist parties were unified into the "Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre [CPN-MC])." In 2017, elections for the National Federal Parliament and for the Provincial Assemblies in Nepal were held. These were the first parliamentary elections in Nepal in 18 years. The major political players were the ruling Nepali Congress party and a communist alliance of the Maoist-Centre party and the Unified Marxist–Leninist Party (CPN-UML) (now the largest opposition party). The communist alliance won a landslide victory.

The alliance between the CPN-UML (led by KP Sharma Oli) and the Maoist Centre party (CPN-MC) (led by Prachanda) lasted three years. Internal disagreement and rivalries led to a split in the alliance in October 2021. The leader of CPN-UML, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, tried to hold on to power unconstitutionally by dissolving the parliament. The opposition party Nepali Congress then took government. The next elections will be held in 2023.

In the first years after the peace agreement was signed, most of the politically active ex-combatants supported the CPN-M. Then, after 2009, some of the active ex-combatants began supporting new factions, although most of them stayed loyal to CPN-M. However, after the split in the communist alliance in 2021, some ex-combatants and some senior Maoist leaders chose to stay with the CPN-UML, whereas some remained with the CPN-MC. In addition to this, some of those ex-combatants who did not have confidence in the existing parties established their own Jana Samajbadi Party (People's Socialist Party), with Subash Raj Kafle as the chairperson. This new party has already appointed provincial coordinators in five out of Nepal`s seven provinces. The party also has several sister organizations, such as a youth organization, a student organization, a sports organization and an entrepreneurs and business organization. It remains to be seen how well the different parties will do in the 2023 elections, but the clash among the communist leaders makes it less likely that there will be a strong and stable government in the near future.

6.5. Politically Active Ex-Combatants 15 Years after the Peace Agreement

As seen in the section on social basis, those ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively were clearly more socially active than those who reintegrated individually. One would perhaps expect to see the same pattern with regard to political activity among the ex-combatants, but here the picture is a bit more complex. Among the Nepalese ex-combatant interviewees, there was a less marked difference between those who reintegrated individually and those who reintegrated collectively when it came to political participation. Six of the 23 interviewed ex-combatants in Chitwan were politically active, while altogether 12 (six females and six males) of those 31 interviewed ex-combatants who reintegrated individually were politically active. In Chitwan, only female ex-combatants were interviewed (as female ex-combatants' situation was the focus of the project in which these interviews were carried out). As many of these women had seen their husbands leave for the Middle East to search for work, they had to manage their households alone, and were quite occupied with day-to-day tasks, thus having less time for political engagements. Several of them were agricultural workers and spent much of their days in the fields. Since these interviews were carried out in Chitwan, it may also have played a certain role that the region is located quite far away from the political center of Kathmandu.

In the group of 31 ex-combatants who reintegrated individually, it should be recalled that 25 were minors (below 18 years when the peace agreement was signed). Of the 12 politically active among those who reintegrated individually, six ex-minors were active in the Discharged People's Liberation Army Nepal (DPLAN), the minors' own protest organization. The other six were active in CPN-M. The adult ex-combatants who reintegrated individually in the Western Hills and became politically active, participated mainly in local politics. As already mentioned, the Nepalese case is special in the sense that almost all the ex-combatants stayed at least three years in the cantonments, which gave them a network and feeling of identity. This may be part of the reason why many of the minors became so disappointed with the separation from the adult soldiers and felt

angry and wanted to continue their political fight. This materialized through DPLAN, the disqualified ex-minor's own organization, established to exert pressure on the government and to attract international attention to their needs for economic compensation. Around 500 ex-minors participate in the organization. DPLAN has conducted a series of dialogue meetings with the government, demanding financial compensation and vocational training for the disqualified minors. It remains to be seen how DPLAN will develop, and whether it will be converted into a group that exerts pressure on many different types of political issues – or becomes transformed into a political party.

There is a certain gender pattern in the experiences of the ex-combatants from Nepal, but since only female ex-combatants were interviewed in Chitwan, no strong conclusions can be drawn on the gender balance. It is, however, possible to make a comparison between the group of female ex-combatants in Chitwan and the group of female ex-combatants who reintegrated individually – by focusing on the percentage of politically active within each of these groups. In Chitwan six out of 23 women were politically active in the CPN-M, which is 26 percent. In the other group six out of 16 female ex-combatants were politically active, which is 37.5 percent. However, in the latter group, three of the active individuals were minors participating in DPLAN, and not with the CPN-M. Thus, if these three are subtracted, the percentage is 18.7 percent, a little lower than in the group of collectively reintegrated women. However, to be able to reach any conclusion on this topic in Nepal, more interviews are necessary, particularly in other collectivities besides Chitwan, and including males.

Being qualified or disqualified also had a relatively strong effect on the ex-combatants' level of political participation. Almost all the interviewed ex-combatants in Chitwan were qualified, whereas the opposite was true regarding the individually reintegrated, where the majority was disqualified. Among the politically active in both groups – that is, both among the collectively reintegrated and the individually reintegrated – those who were politically active (in total 18) were mainly qualified ex-combatants (13), plus the five disqualified minors who were politically active, but only in the minors' own organization, DPLAN.

6.6. Summary of the Case Study of Nepal

In November 2021, 15 years had passed since the Maoist Communist Party and the Nepali government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In this section on Nepal, the post- conflict social and political activity of the ex-combatants from the Communist Party's armed branch, PLA, has been analyzed based on projects carried out in 1916 and in 2020–2021, including some recent updates.

The interviews carried out during the above-mentioned projects reveal contrasting tendencies of social and political activity between those ex-combatants who chose to stay close to the old

cantonment cites and reintegrate collectively there, and those who reintegrated individually or with their family in rural or urban areas elsewhere. These tendencies were in addition influenced by two other important factors in this DDR process: a) whether the ex-combatants were qualified (entitled to cash compensation or rehabilitation) or disqualified (without access to any of these advantages), and b) whether the ex-combatants were minors or not, as minors were most often discharged from the cantonments and sent back to their families and local communities.

The female ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively in Chitwan in general had a high level of social participation and much of this was related to efforts to help each other economically through solidaric loans and other kinds of support. The women in Chitwan also had a somewhat higher level of political activity than the group of individually reintegrated ex-combatants – but only when disregarding the participation of the minors in their own protest organization, DPLAN. Another characteristic of the politically active female ex-combatants in Chitwan is that they were all qualified. Thus, none of the interviewed disqualified ex-combatants in Chitwan were politically active. This finding serves to underline the importance of the economic situation for the ex-combatants.

Those who reintegrated individually were in general less socially active, except for a few adult ex-combatants who had support in their local communities. One reason for the low level of social activity in the group of individually reintegrated is that many of them were minors who were harassed in their local communities, which of course made it difficult for them to participate in any social activities. Some of the minors were active in DPLAN, but not in CPN-M. Those active in CPN-M within the group of individually reintegrated ex-combatants were all qualified and had received their cash compensation. This again is a reminder of the importance of the ex-combatants' economic situation.

Because of the structure of the interviews carried out in the Nepali case, one should be cautious about drawing any strong conclusions. Still, one obvious lesson here is that collective reintegration enhances the level of social participation among ex-combatants. The many **female ex-combatants in Chitwan benefitted very much from the collectivity, especially in economic terms**. But they also felt supported, as many of them were alone while their husbands searched for work abroad. There was much comfort to be found in staying together.

7. Colombia Case Study

7.1. The Conflict and the Armed Actors

The armed conflict between the FARC-EP and the Colombian government broke out in the early 1960s and was ended with the peace agreement signed by the conflicting parties in November 2016 and ratified by Congress on 29–30 November 2016. During the war, the FARC-EP had particularly strong support among persecuted and displaced farmers who became forced into rural peripheries. Armed violence was of relatively low intensity until the 1980s, but thereafter increased, not least because of the drug trade that by then had strongly fastened its grip on Colombia.

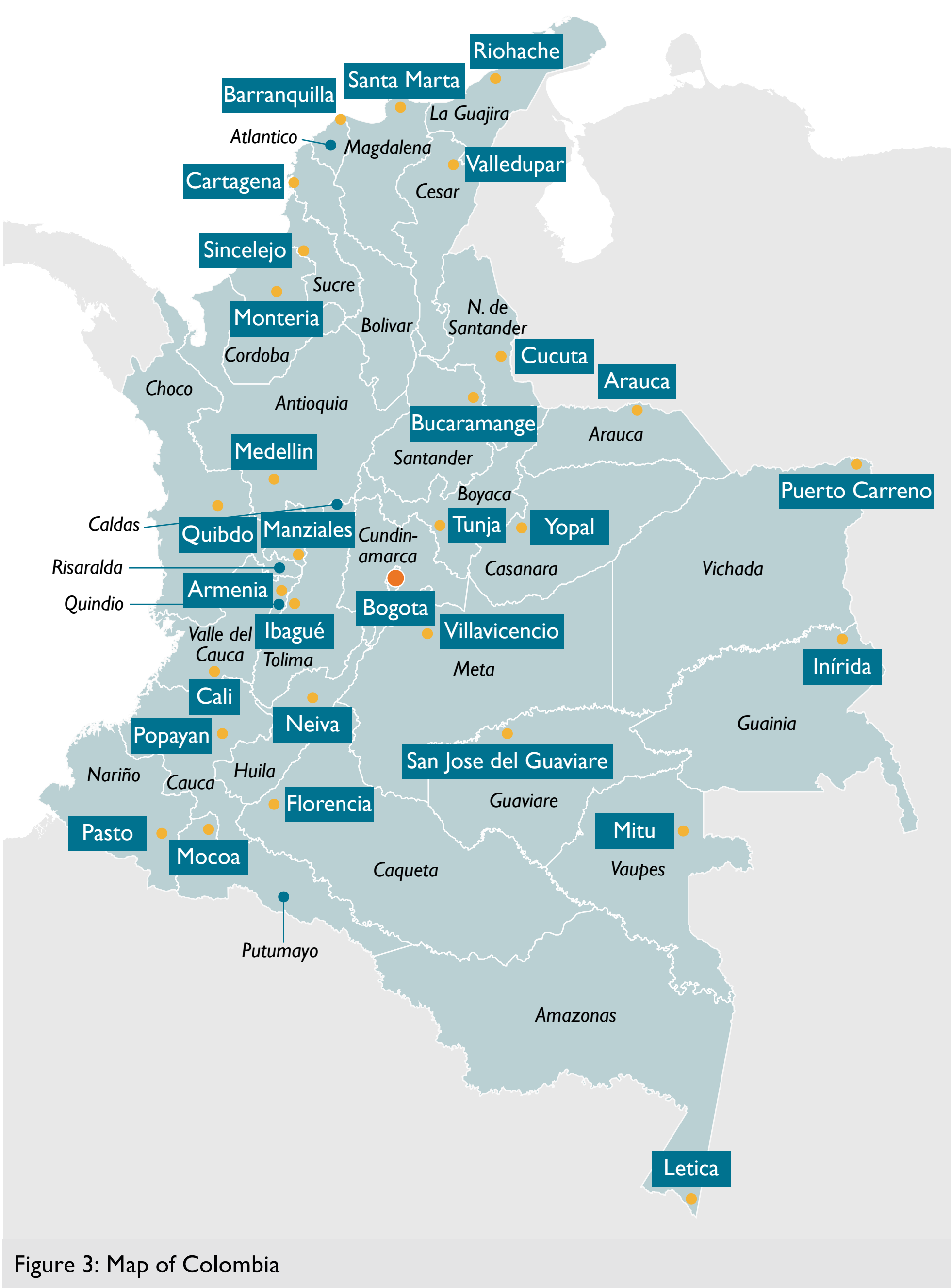

Figure 3: Map of Colombia

In addition to the FARC-EP there have been, and still are, several different armed groups in Colombia, such as the guerrilla groups National Liberation Army (Ejercito de liberación Nacional, [ELN]) and the Popular Liberation Army (Ejercito Popular de Liberación [EPL]). There are also several paramilitary groups, including the Gaitanist Self-Defense of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanas de Colombia); Clan de Golfo; Nuevo Renacer AUC; and Águilas Negras (all with armed presence at the national level). Finally, there is a group of dissidents from the FARC-EP who withdrew just before the peace agreement was signed. The dissidents operate on two fronts: Frente 1(with Gentil Duarte in charge) and Frente 40 (with Ivan Mordisco in charge). However, this study will focus on the demobilization and reintegration process of the FARC-EP and on those ex-combatants who did not become dissidents.

7.2. The Demobilization Process

In accordance with the peace agreement signed in November 2016, the United Nations and the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) was in charge of follow-up and compliance with the ceasefire, disarmament, and demobilization, whereas the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (Agencia Nacional de Reincorporación y Normalización [ARN]) was responsible for the follow-up of the reincorporation process. In addition, the National Reincorporation Council (Consejo de Reincorporación [CRN]) was established in accordance with the peace agreement and included two delegates from the FARC-EP and two delegates from the Colombian government. The aim/mandate of the CNR was to define and follow-up on reincorporation activities.

The DDR process began in 2017, when FARC-EP combatants gathered across 26 zones and points, the so-called Transitional Local Zones for Normalization (Zonas Veredales Transitorias de Normalización [ZVTN]), to lay down their arms (UNSC, 2017; 2019a; 2019b). The locations of the ZVTN were carefully selected in remote areas away from urban centres, thus guaranteeing security to the ex-combatants from the FARC-EP. The ZVTNs were required to have a location far away from areas with illegal economies and not in indigenous reserves or collective land (particularly of black communities). Most of the ZVTNs were located in regions where the FARC-EP had a historical presence (Delgado, 2020; UNSC, 2017; 2019a; 2019b). The FARC-EP turned in their weapons between 8 March and 27 June 2017, and all weapons were removed from the ZVTNs on 15 August (UNMC, 2017). Then, on this same day, the ZVTNs were transformed into Special Territories for Education and Reincorporation (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación [ETCR]). The intention was that the ETCRs should be temporary and exist only until August 2019 (UNMC, 2017). However, the government later announced that there would be a two-year transition period, lasting until August 2021. The ETCRs were intended to serve as a space for the training of ex-combatants to prepare them for their reincorporation into civilian life. The mandate for the ETCRs to remain as they are, has been renewed and they are referred to as the “former ETCRs” (antiguos ETCRs). The idea was that they should become permanent spaces where the ex-combatants can live. (UNMC, 2017; Johansson, 2021).

In total 13,999 FARC ex-combatants became officially registered with the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace during the DDR process. Of these, 13,119 ex-combatants (76 percent males and 24 percent females) were still participating in the reincorporation process as of 31 January 2021, with 9,610 FARC ex-combatants living outside the ETCRs and 2,591 ex-combatants still living in the active ETCRs at this point of time (ARN, 2021; Johansson, 2021). However, the population of the ETCRs also includes the nuclear family members of the ex-combatants, meaning that the number of persons living on an ETCR property probably is considerably higher than these figures indicate. In addition, a significant number of ex-combatants have sustained contact and regularly visit the ETCRs (Martinez & Lefebre, 2019). In January 2021, only 23 ETCRs were still active, as some had been closed down due to a high level of violence in the area, or for other reasons, such as flooding (Johansson, 2021).

Many ex-combatants outside of the ETCRs have also formed New Areas of Reincorporation (Nuevas Áreas de Reincorporación [NARs]) for different reasons. As of 16 June 2020, there were 93 NARs in 17 departments all over Colombia (Forero Rueda, 2020). The NARs are not officially recognized by the government since they were never formally part of the peace agreement. The NARs do not have judicial status and the ex-combatants outside the formal ETCRs were not entitled to reincorporation benefits, although they did receive a monthly stipend (Delgado, 2020). This is also the case for individuals from the FARC-EP who chose to reintegrate individually and go back to their family or to an urban or rural area in search of jobs or education. However, after 2019, some of the NARs have received food supplies like in the ETCRs, and some collective reincorporation projects have also been approved. The NARs also have coordination and maintain a dialogue with the ARN on reincorporation strategies (Interview).

7.3. Reintegrating Together or Alone – The Social Basis

The experiences from the collective and individual reintegration in this case study of Colombia are based on two projects[15] and include altogether 42 interviews with ex-combatants (19 female and 23 male interviewees). Of these, 18 live in five different ETCRs, two live in a NAR, and 22 live in different areas of the country, as they reintegrated individually. Of the 42 interviewees, 22 were former minors. However, they had all turned 18 years old by the time they were interviewed. The interviews from the two projects included visits to five ETCRs and one NAR, making it possible to observe the social and political life within these areas. In addition to these two projects, this section on Colombia leans on findings from the PhD thesis of Sandra Johansson (2021), *The Role of Political Engagement in the Reincorporation Outcomes of Ex-Combatants within an Intractable Conflict Environment: A Case Study of the FARC in Colombia (2016–2020)*. Johansson has carried out 44 interviews in Colombia for her PhD, 21 of them with FARC ex-combatants and eight with FARC ex-commanders (mostly from ETCRs and a few NARs). Some of the remaining interviews were conducted with community members, NGO workers, and youth leaders. Her PhD also pays much attention to the FARC's history and visions.

All the interviewed female and male ex-combatants who lived in ETCRs were socially active. They participated in project groups, in various types of skills development courses, and in various types of committees and councils, not least in the gender committee. The character of the collective life in the ETCRs facilitates the establishment of many different types of organizations,

Box 5. The DDR Process in Colombia in Figures

- Total number of ex-combatants registered in 2016: 13,999
- Still active in the reincorporation process in January 2021: 13,119
- Of these: 24 percent females and 76 percent males

Collective Reintegration in Colombia

ZVTNs:
During the demobilization process the ex-combatants gathered in 26 different Transitional Zones for Normalization (ZVTNs).

ETCRs:
On 15 August 2017, the ZVTNs were transformed into Special Territories for Education and Reincorporation (ETCRs).

The intention was that these should be temporary, but the mandate has been renewed with the idea that the ETCRs can become permanent spaces where the ex-combatants can live. In January 2021, 2,591 ex-combatants still lived in 23 active ETCRs.

The land and the houses of the ETCRs are rented and paid for by the Colombian state. As of 10 August 2021, seven ETCRs own their land and two more are in process of buying their land.

NARs:
Many ex-combatants have formed New Areas of Reincorporation (NARs) where they live together in other places than the ETCRs (although some are located close to ETCRs).

These have been established by ex-combatants who for different reasons left the ETCRs and by ex-combatants who did not stay in any ETCR. The ex-combatants who stay in NARs own or rent their land, but they do not receive any state support for the land or the houses, as these spontaneous settlements were not part of the peace agreement.

Sources: ARN, 2021; Johansson, 2021; interviews

committees, and groups. In several ETCRs the ex-combatants had started or were planning to start eco-tourism projects aimed at giving the tourists an understanding of how the life in the guerrilla had been. There were many agricultural projects. In one ETCR, ex-combatants had established their own organization for indigenous groups. The ETCR in Colinas established the cooperative "Cooperativa Multiactiva de la Amazonia Colombiana" – COOAMCOL, working within two sectors: agroindustry and tourism. It helps small-scale farmers (*reincorporados* and those from surrounding communities) to create processed products to bring added value to their agricultural goods. The cooperative further brings international, national, and local tourists from San José de Guaviare to Colinas, and even further into the Amazon on trips of various kinds.

Those who chose to stay in the ZVTNs when these were transformed into ETCRs had certain socio-economic advantages compared to the ex-combatants who left to reintegrate individually or to establish a NAR. The FARC ex-combatants who live in the ETCRs do not have to pay for housing, electricity, food, or water, as the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) covers these costs. The ex-combatants do not own the houses in the ETCR. These are rented, but the government pays their rent. Every month, they receive cooking oil, meat, "panela" (unrefined cane sugar) and some other food items that are distributed among them. The government also rents land for crops and cattle for many ETCRs, although often farther away from where people live.

In addition, many projects in the ETCRs help the ex-combatants to improve their livelihoods. Young women with children enjoy various types of support – such as day-care centers and husbands who do their share of looking after the children – as gender equality is emphasized and practiced within the ETCRs. This allows women (including former minors members of the FARC) to continue their education. All the ETCRs have a gender committee, of which both genders are active members. The gender committees are involved in many different activities within the ETCRs, including in the design of new projects.[16] This emphasis on gender equality is in stark contrast to gender relations across Colombia in general, where traditional gender roles continue to prevail and where the level of violence against women is high.

The ETCRs have a social infrastructure that facilitates political activity. In addition, the ex-combatants in the ETCRs have more security and a better socio-economic situation than ex-combatants living elsewhere, since housing and basic food items are covered. Ex-combatants in the ETCRs normally have more capacity to dedicate attention to social and political activity than those who live outside of the ETCRs. According to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNMC), only two assassinations occurred inside an ETCR between November 2016 and December 2020, compared to 35 percent of ex-combatant assassinations occurring in NARs or their surroundings in 2020 alone (Johansson, 2021). This security is important for the ex-combatants' capacity to move freely around and be socially and politically active. This said, it should be added that more than 300 FARC ex-combatants have been killed, most of whom had been living in ETCRs, but the killings took place in neighboring or other communities – not inside the ETCRs themselves.

The ex-combatants in the ETCRs also benefit from the same economic support arrangements as all demobilized ex-combatants, as this support is given independently of whether an ex-combatant reintegrated individually or collectively. Every demobilized ex-FARC member receives 90 percent of the minimum wage, which is 740,000 COP (US$ 192) per month. However, this monthly pay is halted if and when a demobilized person finds employment.

Many of the ex-combatants who now live in the NARs first spent some time in an ETCR before leaving, for reasons ranging from lack of security to remoteness, difficulties in selling their products, and wanting to stay closer to their families. However, some of the NARs have linked closely up with nearby ETCRs. As only two interviews were conducted with ex-combatants who live in a NAR, no strong conclusions can be drawn on the NARs in general. It seems there have been fewer projects in the NARs than in the average ETCR, probably due to less funding opportunities. However, this situation has changed somewhat since 2019, and currently a high level of economic and political activity can be observed in some NARs, notably in Huila, Tolima, and Meta (Interview). However, the interviewees from the NAR complained about violence in the area and a lack of security. This may also hamper their mobility. In her PhD thesis, Johansson (2021:246) furthermore emphasizes that while many political activities, events, and group meetings take place in the ETCRs, and often on a daily basis, this happens only once to twice a week in the NARs, as political activities, events and groups are mainly targeted towards the ETCRs.

Finally, there is a third group of ex-combatants who reintegrated individually and left the ZVTNs to stay alone or with family or friends. Of the 22 interviewees, only those who lived in Medellín, and Bogotá were socially active. None of the others who lived in different smaller and more remote areas of the country were socially active. Some of them kept their ex-combatant status secret in fear of local stigmatization and lack of security. However, the party activity carried out by Comunes and associated networks and project activity in Bogotá and Medellín kept those of the interviewees who live there very active socially. This was particularly the case in Medellín, where some of the interviewees also obtained the possibility to study at the University of Antioquia. The network of FARC ex-combatants in Medellín also had many projects with a gender focus.

7.4. The Transformation of FARC into a Political Party

To understand the ex-combatants' political involvement, their choices, and their possibilities it is necessary to take a look at the FARC's transition into a political party and how this new party is organized and operates. FARC-EP was transformed into a political party in August 2017 and named the Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Common (Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común. (FARC). The new party had several problems, some due to the continued use of the acronym FARC. This was much criticized, as many were of the opinion that the name would remind people about the negativity of the war instead of heralding visions for the future (Johansson, 2021). Thus, on 25 January 2021, during the Second National Extraordinary Assembly, a

majority of FARC political party members voted to change the name to Comunes. The symbol of the rose continued to function as the party's emblem.

There has been considerable internal struggle in the political party FARC (now Comunes). The struggle has evolved around personalities with strong roles during the war. In June 2020, the leader of the FARC, Londoño Echeverri (alias Timochenko), expelled two important FARC-EP ex-commanders who had once formed part of the Central Command Structure and who had opposed his own leadership: Fabian Ramirez and Andrés Paris. The peace agreement promised the FARC as a political party five seats in the Senate and five seats in the House of Representatives for two four-year terms, from 2018 to 2026. Two of these seats were given to Iván Marquez and Jesús Santrich, but later were left empty as both became dissidents and rearmed in August 2019.

In March 2018, presidential and congressional elections were held for the first time after the peace accord was signed. However, the FARC received only 0.24 percent of the total votes for the Senate, and 0.21% of the total votes for the House of Representatives (Registraduría, 2018). In October 2019, regional elections were held and the FARC presented 308 candidates (of these 111 were ex-combatants, mostly in the departments of Antioquia, Cesar, and Meta) in 23 departments (Johansson, 2021). The FARC received 75,000 votes and won two council member seats. However, six ex-combatants from the FARC were elected as council members in coalitions with other political parties or on their lists. FARC candidates running in coalitions with and for other parties, won three mayoral positions (Forero Ortiz, 2019; Llorente and Méndez, 2019).

7.5. Politically Active Ex-combatants 5 years after the Peace Agreement

All the interviewed ex-combatants from ETCRs, males and females, participated in political meetings within their ETCR and voted during elections. In some ETCR they had organized transport to go together to the polling station. Interviewed female ex-combatants emphasized that the focus on gender equality and the existence of child-care centers in the ETCRs facilitated their political participation. However, participation above this level depended on the geographical location of the ETCR and on the existence of a candidate from the FARC's political party, Comunes, to vote and campaign for (or ex-combatant candidates participating in leftist alliances). It also depended on the historical context of the area within which each ETCR was located. Thus, ex-combatants in Colinas reported that this area had historically been subject to army bombardments of coca plants, and therefore people in the surrounding communities were too nervous to participate in political activities.

Comunes also has a different structure than most political parties, as it is constituted by "comunas" which are local distributions of 30 militants each. Each *comuna* has a political adviser, a financial adviser, and advisers for local socio-economic and political growth and development, and communication. They can create new adviser positions if needed. Several of the interviewees who were politically active at the local level had an adviser function in a *comuna*.

However, beyond socio-economic basis, geographic location, and security considerations, there is another factor that is important to the social and political activity in the ETCRs. This is the group identity of the ex-combatants; their historical basis and their perceptions of what the FARC has represented and what it should represent in the future. As one of the interviewees pointed out, the FARC has always had two routes: the political and the military.

Poster in the ETCR Llano Grande, Dabeiba. Photo: Wenche Iren Hauge / PRIO

This interviewee emphasized that the FARC never wanted to make war, and that they had always wanted peace, but they had to fight because of corrupt governments that never kept their promises and let people down. In this sense, the FARC had always been political to its core. Thus, to live in an ETCR was like continuing to fight together for the political goals of the FARC. During the war, at times when they were not engaging in combat or moving camps, the FARC members often spent their evenings together reading about and discussing politics, in line with the National School that the FARC had set up in the 1970s (Johansson, 2021). Now they could continue these practices within the framework of the ETCRs.

Some of the ETCRs had frequent visits from ex-combatants who were living in cities or in places close by. This was the case, for example, in the ETCR of Dabeiba, which received politically active ex-combatant visitors who participated in campaigning and political work for Comunes in Medellín. This type of visit contributed to establishing important links between the places where the leadership are and the bases that the ETCRs represent. Likewise, there is also interaction

between many ETCRs and the population in the surrounding communities. This interaction is woven into the design of many projects that exist in the ETCRs and also takes place through special events and common sports activities. Often the mottos of the productive projects are related to peaceful co-existence and reconciliation. Local community participants in ETCR meetings are accepted "as if they were ex-combatants" and, according to Johansson, "Unless someone says something, they are so integrated that one cannot tell between the ex-combatants, the ex-combatants family members and the local community members" (Johansson, 2021: 222). In addition to their own and nationally supported projects, the ETCRs attract many international organizations that initiate projects, help with education, and so on. This helps the ETCRs to form international networks and, in some cases, also attracts neighboring communities to projects and events.

The two interviewees (one male and one female) who lived in the (same) NAR were both politically active, but only within the NAR, where they attended Comunes meetings. They also voted during elections, as did many of the ex-combatants in the ETCRs.

With regard to the level of political participation among those interviewees who reintegrated individually, there is a difference between those ex-combatants who live in urban areas and those who live alone or with their family in more remote areas. The interviewed ex-combatants who live in Bogotá and Medellín (both females and males) were all politically active. Since FARC leaders and politicians are quite active in Medellín and Bogotá, and since many ex-combatants live there, networks have developed that these ex-combatants can lean on. In Medellín, for example, there are about 400 resident FARC ex-combatants. The FARC also has communal spaces for gatherings in the larger cities, which facilitate political meetings and common activities. None of the ex-combatants who live in more remote areas were politically active, except one. This man, who was hiding his FARC affiliation in the local community, travelled to Bogotá to attend political meetings and vote for Comunes. As for those ex-combatants who live in remote areas, there was otherwise no difference between the genders, as neither female nor male ex-combatants were politically active.

7.6. Summary of the Case Study of Colombia

November 2021 marked five years since the Peace Agreement between the FARC-EP and the Colombian Government was signed and ratified by Congress. In this section on Colombia, the post-conflict social and political participation of the ex-combatants from the FARC-EP has been discussed and analyzed based on research projects carried out in the period 2019–2022.

The interviews carried out during these projects reveal a clear tendency. Those ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively, mainly in the ETCRs, were more socially and politically active than ex-combatants who reintegrated individually or with their spouse or family. However, those ex-combatants who reintegrated into NAR collectives were in general somewhat less socially active

than those who reintegrated in the ETCRs. Part of the explanation for this is that the population in the NARs consisted of more spontaneous reintegration groups – including some who had left an ETCR for security reasons – and the arrangements of the NARs were neither foreseen nor guaranteed any rights to economic support in the peace agreement, although the situation has changed somewhat since 2019. Currently, in some NARs, a relatively high level of political and economic activities can be observed (Interview).

On the other hand, those who reintegrated individually into urban areas in big cities like Bogotá and Medellín were in general politically active and some of them were also socially active. The reason for this was that Comunes can make use of localities for political and social gatherings in these cities, which facilitate social networking and political activity. In Bogotá and Medellín there were also relatively large groups of ex-combatants who socialized and were able to start up projects together. It was harder for those ex-combatants who reintegrated individually into rural areas far away from urban zones. Some of them were even hiding their FARC identity for fear of repression. Almost none of them were socially active. Those few who were politically active travelled to Bogotá to go to political meetings there.

Finally, some words about gender equality. For female ex-combatants it has clearly been an advantage to be part of a group of collectively reintegrated ex-combatants, whether this is in an ETCR or in a NAR. This emerged quite clearly in interviews with women from the ETCRs. Almost all of them were members of the Gender Committee in their ETCR, and they were in general socially active in various other ways. Most were also politically active, although mainly at the local level. Life was more difficult for female ex-combatants who returned to their home community alone, and none of this set were socially active.

8. A Comparison of the Three Cases

This report has analysed three DDR processes that in November/December 2021 celebrate their fifth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth anniversaries – respectively, the DDR processes in Colombia, Nepal, and Guatemala. The DDR processes took place on two different continents, Latin America (South and Central America) and Asia. The timespan between them and the differences in geographical and socio-political contexts constitute some interesting grounds for comparison and make it possible to observe how DDR processes potentially change their character over time. However, despite differences in time and context, the three DDR processes also had their similarities. They were all the outcome of ideological wars in countries with extreme socio-economic inequality.

The most important conclusion from the comparison is that female ex-combatants in particular benefitted from collective reintegration. This could be observed in all three cases, and particularly in the Colombian case, where the number of collectives/ETCRs is relatively high. The Guatemalan case is interesting in the sense that the progress of the female ex-combatants who live in the cooperatives have persisted over a long time and today these women are leaders of the cooperatives, proprietors of land, and involved in normally male-dominated activities, such as cattle raising, coffee production, marketing, and sales activities (also for export). In Nepal, the female ex-combatants had some additional challenges to struggle with, as many husbands went abroad in search for work. However, the female-headed households of the collectively reintegrated resisted these difficulties through solidarity and help from the ex-combatants who lived together with them. Female fighters who married ex-combatants from different castes in Nepal were also protected from discrimination and disrespect in the collectives where they lived with fellow ex-combatants who supported them and showed them respect.

One important reason why the female ex-combatants benefitted so strongly from collective reintegration in these three countries is that gender relations within the FARC-EP, URNG, and PLA were quite progressive, and this in societies where lacking gender equality and traditional patriarchal attitudes still dominate. The female ex-combatants who chose to stay with their fellow ex-combatants largely also escaped various types of religious and cultural discrimination in their respective societies. Within the URNG, FARC-EP, and PLA violence against women was condemned and punished. In the FARC-EP, LGBTQ individuals were also acknowledged and respected,[17] and FARC's attitude on these issues even provoked protest among conservative religious circles in Colombia during the peace process. In Nepal, the PLA accepted and respected inter-caste marriages and organized the same ceremony for all couples who married, irrespective of caste, which is unheard of in Nepal. The PLA even forbid the use of slang that could insult persons on the basis of gender or caste. In the three different armed groups the female members conducted all kinds of tasks, from combatants to communicators, health workers, arms and ammunition coordinators, and leaders. The FARC-EP and PLA also had several female commanders, although in Guatemala there were fewer. When the ex-combatants reintegrated collectively the gender equality seen during the war continued to exist within the collectives. This came quite naturally, as they were used to seeing each other performing different kinds of tasks and working together during the war.

Comments from Interviewees: Gender Relations within URNG, FARC-EP and PLA

URNG Guatemala

"I was well treated by the male guerrillas. I felt equal. They treated everybody the same way." – Female ex-combatant

"In practice the guerrilla leaders worked for equality between the genders. We were very well treated when it comes to personal relations and all that. There were no violations and strict ethical rules with regard to this." – Another female ex-combatant

FARC-EP Colombia

"I remember this as something beautiful. There was no discrimination. If I had been raped, I would just have left the guerrilla. They were quite strict. You could not first have one partner, and then another and another. The relationships were respectful. We had a collective conscience. There was no discrimination. You could sleep without your clothes, and nobody would touch you. This was the most beautiful – the respect." – Female ex-combatant

"We were equal. If women were the only ones who had to cook, 'es ser machista' (this was considered as being macho). We fell in love but being together was with the permission of the commander. We also had to have a 'good behavior' to be allowed to be together. Everything was the same for men and women. As a man, you also had to wash your clothes and your place. I understand that we have a new malehood, 'no machista` (not macho) but living in a machista *society."* – Male ex-combatant

PLA Nepal

"When I joined the PLA, there were few women. Although we were guerrilla soldiers, we lived in people's houses. We knocked on people's doors, and they were surprised to see a woman in military uniform . . . . At that time, the government used to say that if a woman touched a gun, it would not work. It was a difficult time. However, after the women began joining the Maoist movement, I felt that the situation began to change for women. In my village, no one used to talk about violence in the home or in the family. It would be regarded as a sin to speak about it. But now, after the Maoists came there, now they can talk about it." – Female ex-combatant

The male ex-combatants also benefitted from the collective reintegration. A high level of social participation could be observed among both female and male ex-combatants who stayed in collectives in all three countries. Although differences between the collectively reintegrated can be observed in each case, a common characteristic is that they all established their own organizations, committees, and groups, which in turn facilitated a high level of social activity among them and also attracted socio-economic support from national and international organizations.

In general, the level of political participation among the ex-combatants who reintegrated collectively was relatively high in all three cases, although with some variations among them. The level of political activity among the collectively reintegrated was in particular influenced by the following factors: 1) the location/remoteness of the cooperative/collective from urban and political centers, 2) the security/possibilities for safe mobility of the ex-combatants and 3) the particular socio-economic situation of each collective and how much capacity the population in each of them would have for political activity. In general, the collectively reintegrated ex-combatants in the three cases were mainly active in local politics. In addition, the status of the ex-guerrilla organization's own political party in each case differed and this also had its effect on the ex-combatants' political participation. In Guatemala and Colombia, the guerrilla organizations URNG and FARC-EP were transformed into political parties, whereas in Nepal the Maoist Party CPN-M had been established before the war and continued to exist, while its armed branch, PLA, was dissolved. Whereas the transformation of the FARC-EP into a political party was smooth and guaranteed in the Colombian peace agreement, and the new party, FARC (later renamed Comunes), quickly achieved a solid organizational structure, the URNG in Guatemala needed two years to get formal approval as a political party, and thus lost momentum and precious time. This is an indication of how important it is that the transformation of an armed group into a political party is guaranteed in the peace agreement itself, like in Colombia. In Nepal, on the other hand, a certain distance between pure party members and the ex-combatants who had experienced the fighting first-hand could be observed.

In general, those who reintegrated individually in all three cases were less socially and politically active. The individual reintegration took a particularly hard toll on the female fighters. In addition to the struggle to find a job and get some income, they now also had to struggle with male chauvinistic attitudes and traditional gender roles in their respective societies. Many of them were harassed because they *as females* had joined an armed group. This was particularly bad in Nepal. Several of those who reintegrated individually (including male ex-combatants) in all three cases concealed their guerrilla identity for fear of stigmatization and harassment. This of course also affected their potential for being socially and politically active.

However, there is a difference between those ex-combatants who reintegrated individually into urban areas and larger cities, and those who reintegrated individually into (often remote) rural areas. This pattern is especially clear in Colombia, but it has also become more visible over time

in Guatemala. In the capitals and larger cities, where the political parties of the ex-guerrilla organizations have their headquarters, networks tend to become established among ex-combatants based on the activities of the political party. In Colombia, the FARC can make use of communal spaces for gatherings in Bogotá and Medellín. Thus, political participation among those who reintegrated individually is mainly found among ex-combatants who live in urban areas. In contrast, those who reintegrated into remote rural areas seem to struggle hard to make ends meet economically and they also experience stigmatization and lack of respect. The most resourced ex-combatants in terms of education, contacts, and networks tend to be attracted to urban areas for reintegration, while ex-combatants with poorer backgrounds (many of them peasants) tend to return to rural areas. This tendency is clearly observed in the Guatemalan case, for example, where many of those ex-combatants who were peasants and came from very poor living conditions returned to these same areas during the reintegration process. In Guatemala, this group also constituted the largest number of ex-combatants from the URNG.

9. Conclusion

This report has compared and analyzed three different DDR processes, respectively in Guatemala, Colombia and Nepal, with a focus on how the type of reintegration - whether collective or individual - has affected the ex-combatants' social and political participation. The comparison has been conducted in a gender perspective. In addition, the analysis has looked at the effects of the transformation of guerrilla organizations into political parties (in Guatemala and Colombia) and the developments of the Maoist Communist Party in Nepal (CPN-M).

The main conclusion from the comparative analysis is that collective reintegration increases social and political participation among ex-combatants, and that it is particularly beneficial for female ex-combatants. One of the explanations of the positive effects of collective reintegration is that groups who stay together and share a common history and identity simply facilitate the establishment of organizations, committees, and working groups among them. This in turn increases the social activity among them and potentially also the political participation. Another effect is that increased gender equality as practiced during the war continues to be practiced within these collectives.

That said, there are also some differences between the cases and some factors that modify the positive effects of collective reintegration. One is the geographic location of the collectives/cooperatives. For security reasons, they are often located quite far away from urban areas. This makes political participation at the national level more difficult. Thus, a strong characteristic from all the three cases is that political participation among the collectively reintegrated mainly takes place at the local level. In contrast those ex-combatants who reintegrated into urban areas, and particularly to larger cities (like for example Bogotá and Medellín in Colombia), are politically active beyond the local level. Here it can be observed that also individually reintegrated ex-combatants are able to link up with party networks and be socially and politically active.

Another modifying factor to the positive effects of collective reintegration is the long-term sustainability of the ex-combatants' collective socio-economic basis. It makes a big difference whether the ex-combatants own the land they farm and the houses they live in, and on what terms the land and houses are bought. If the land and the houses are rented and paid for by the state, the duration of these arrangement matters. The land of the collectively reintegrated ex-combatants in Guatemala was bought on very unfavorable terms and they have been struggling with a huge debt. On the other hand, they own the land, and one of the collectives has been able to pay down its debt after 25 years. In Colombia, the land of the ETCRs as well as the houses the ex-combatants live in is rented by the state, and it remains to be seen for how long the state support will remain in place and what challenges the ex-combatants will have to face when this arrangement comes to an end.

The individually reintegrated in rural areas appear to be the real losers in all three cases. They struggle with insecurity and stigmatization, and they have problems making ends meet

economically. Unfortunately, these are ex-combatants who already were poor peasants when they joined the guerrillas, and who tend to return to the same marginalized areas where there is little future for them.

Finally, the transformation of a guerrilla organization into a political party is important to the continued political support among the ex-combatants, or as in the Nepali case, how the developments of the mother party, CPN-M, of their guerrilla organization, PLA, has been. Whereas the URNG in Guatemala and the CPN-M in Nepal have experienced many splits and internal rivalries, Comunes (earlier named FARC) in Colombia has been able to protect its unity. In Guatemala, the splits have resulted in less support for the URNG and its offspring and more support to protest organizations. In Nepal, the splits have led to much of the same, but also to support for other leftist parties. The support for Comunes in Colombia among its bases seems to be relatively stable, although some feel let down by national politicians and prefer local support.

9.1. Recommendations

- The UN operational guide on DDR processes should add collective reintegration of ex-combatants as an alternative to its individually and community-based reintegration approaches and emphasize the positive effects observed from collective reintegration on social and political participation in several countries.

- The positive effects of collective reintegration on gender equality should be mentioned in the chapter on Gender and DDR in the UN operational guide.

- There should be an emphasis on the importance of ownership of land among ex-combatants, in particular to make collective reintegration sustainable over time.

- Particular considerations should be given in the UN Operational Guide to making female ex-combatants owners of land.

- To make collective reintegration sustainable over time, reasonable arrangements should be made for ex-combatants to become owners of the houses they live in which in most cases are rented by the state for a medium-term period.

- In order to widen their long-term basis for income, efforts should be made to include ex-combatants from collectives in arrangements for job facilities in firms that give apprentice positions.

- Particular support and follow-up should be given to ex-combatants who reintegrate individually into rural areas, because research has revealed that these ex-combatants tend to become the losers in the reintegration process.

- National campaigns to end the stigmatization of ex-combatants should be encouraged in order to facilitate a peaceful and sustainable reintegration process.

- Project support for activities that increase interaction between collectively reintegrated ex-combatants and nearby communities should be encouraged, as very positive effects have been observed from such activities.

- Research has observed increased gender equality among the collectively reintegrated, and positive effects from the work of their gender committees. The gender committees' progressive work should be supported, and the committees encouraged to bring their activities to neighboring communities and the wider society.

- Actors involved in peace processes and mediation should be encouraged to focus on the positive effects of a guaranteed transformation of an armed group into a political party in the peace agreement, as this arrangement in some cases has proved to help the ex-combatants to capture the momentum and speed up their post-conflict political participation. ■

Acronyms

AMMAA:	Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies
ANN:	Alliance of the New Nation
ARN:	Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization
CA:	Constituent Assembly
CEI:	The Special Commission for Reintegration
CNR:	The National Council for Reincorporation
COCODES:	Community Development Council
CODECA:	Committee for the Development of Peasants
CODEDES:	Departemental Development Council
COMUDES:	Municipal Development Council
CONADES:	National Development Council
COOAMCOL:	Multiactive Cooperative of the Colombian Amazonas
COP:	Colombian Peso
COREDES:	Regional Development Council
CPA:	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPN-M:	Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists
CPN-ML:	Communist Party of Nepal – Marxist-Leninist
CPN-MC:	Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist Centre
CPN-UML:	Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninist

DDR:	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPLAN:	Discharged People's Liberation Army Nepal
ECO:	Coordinating Team
EGP:	Guerrilla Army of the Poor
ELN:	National Liberation Army
ETCR:	Special Territories for Education and Reincorporation
EPL:	Popular Liberation Army
FAR:	Rebel Armed Forces
FARC-EP:	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army
FARC:	Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Common (Political Party)
FGT:	The Guillermo Toriello Foundation
FRG:	Guatemalan Popular Front
IDDRS:	Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
MINUGUA:	United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala
MVM:	The Monitoring and Verification Mission
NAR:	New Areas of Reincorporation
NPR:	Nepalese Rupee
ORPA:	Revolutionary Organisation of the People in Arms
PAC:	Civil Defense Patrols

PGT: Guatemalan Workers' Party

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PT: The Workers' Party

TLC: Free Trade Agreement

UN: United Nations

UNE: National Unity for Hope

UNMIN: United Nations Mission in Nepal

UNMC: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

URNG: Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity

USAID: United States Agency of International Development

VLMR: Verified Minors and Late Recruits

ZVTN: Transitional Local Zones for Normalization

Notes

1. The first of the two projects, conducted in 2005–2006 was titled: "The Fate of Former Combatants in Guatemala: Spoilers or Agents for Change?" Methodologically, it was based on semi-structured interviews, observation, and some focus-group discussions. The second project, conducted in 2007–2008, was titled: "The Demobilization and Political Participation of Female Fighters in Guatemala". This project is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with female ex-combatants from Guatemala and on observations during fieldwork. In addition, it draws on the URNG's own material, including a survey from 1997 (URNG, 1997).

2. Development Council. See Aguilera's chapter for a comprehensive description of the work and organization of the development councils.

3. The problem of violence against women in Guatemala is described in the book, *Feminicidio en Guatemala*.

4. Rodrigo Asturias was the leader of ORPA. His *nomme de guerre* was Gaspar Ilom, but since he is better known by his real name in Guatemala, we have preferred to use that here.

5. In Guatemala a *campo pagado* costs 35,000 quetzales (US$ 4,834) (Interview with Asturias).

6. Tribunal Supremo Electoral, 1999; 2003.

7. The original text in Spanish: "Nosotros creemos haber superado la visión de la incorporación como algo operativo, porque ese fue el énfasis y le dimos una visión más de proyección política y conceptual. Nos hemos centrado mucho en fortalecer el poder local, trabajamos en la Ley de Consejos [de desarollo] y nos hemos extendido más con la visión de inclusión de comunidades que solo de compañeros. También hay esfuerzos por la incidencia a nivel municipal. Los recuerdos y la memoria nos unen" (FGT, 2016: 165).

8. The original text in Spanish: "con los pedacitos de tierra familiar es muy difícil, pues aunque arrienden o tengas iniciativas productivas, lo que hay que invertir en dinero y trabajo no compensa; por eso los compañeros campesinos incorporados de base están muy pobres . . . Eso no permite participar en reuniones y actividades políticas porque no dan los recursos. Incluso algunos compañeros han renunciado a tener familia porque no pueden alimentarlos." (FGT, 2016: 152)

9. The fate and destination of this group of 8,636 registered persons remains largely unknown. It is often referred to as "self-integration" (Robins and Bhandari, 2016).

10. The two projects were carried out by the author in collaboration with Nepalese researcher Debendra Prasad Adhikari in 2016 and 2020–2021. The first project included Myanmar and was titled: "Gender Equality, Peace and Security in Nepal and Myanmar." Methodologically, the study of Nepal was based on semi-structured interviews, observation, and some focus-group discussions. The second project, carried out in 2020–2021 focused on demobilized minors from the PLA and constituted part of a project focusing on the gender dimension of minors in DDR, which also included Colombia (Hauge, 2021).

11. Interviews.

12. A warm female garment blouse mostly worn in South Asia, including Nepal.

13. Traditional outfit for women, originating in the

South Asia including Nepal.

14. Interviewed in Shaktikor, Chitwan, 30 March 2017.

15. The first project was carried out in 2020-21, and focused on demobilized minors from FARC-EP. This project was based on semi-structured interviews. In Colombia, altogether 22 interviews were conducted for this project, with persons who had entered FARC-EP as minors (below 18 years of age). See note note 9. The second project is the current one, 'Ex-Combatants' Choices'. Twenty interviews with ex-combatants from FARC-EP were carried out for this project in 2021–2022.

16. This, for example, happened during one meeting of the gender committee in the ETCR in Dabeiba, where the researcher Hauge was present and was able to observe their discussion of an eco-tourism project evaluated from a gender perspective.

17. This happened after 2010. Before the 9th guerrilla conference in 2010, LGTBQ+ individuals were not allowed to join the FARC and could only work in military or political support functions (Interview).

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Ex-Combatants' Choices: Reintegrating Together or Alone – Effects on Political Participation

Case studies from Guatemala, Nepal and Colombia

Reintegration of ex-combatants takes place in different ways and in many different global contexts. This report looks at the reintegration of armed groups from three different conflicts and country contexts – respectively, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Nepal and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP). The focus is on the post-conflict social and political participation of these ex-combatants. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on reintegration processes, but the focus has mainly been on security and socio-economic factors and less on social factors and group identity. The report builds on 153 interviews with female and male ex-combatants from Guatemala, Nepal and Colombia. The main research question in this report is how collective and individual reintegration affects the degree of social and political participation among the ex-combatants. The report incorporates a gender perspective into the analysis of this question.

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