THE DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

OF CHILD SOLDIERS:

EL SALVADOR CASE STUDY

Beth Verhey
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Acknowledgments

Learning from the experience of child soldiers in El Salvador would not have been possible without the candid former child soldiers who generously participated in the follow-up survey for this case study. They remain anonymous, struggling for recognition and opportunity amid El Salvador’s continuing economic and security fragility. Special commendation is due to the survey team from José Simeón Cañas Universidad Centroamericana, UCA, notably José Miquel Cruz, Rubi Esmeralda Arana and Maria Santacruz Giralt. The author is grateful to UNICEF El Salvador, Ximena de la Barra and Jean Gough, and Rädda Barnen, especially Jon Skurdal, for hosting and facilitating the field work. Special thanks are also due to ACISAM, Ernestina Chávez, Ilene Cohn, Father Jon Cortina, Suleyna Duran, Marcelo Fabre, Homes Unidos and Andrew Russell.
Executive Summary

The two-year negotiating process and resulting January 1992 peace accord that ended El Salvador’s long civil war are considered one of the United Nations’ most successful peacemaking missions. However, the process was a missed opportunity for child soldiers. 1

The participation of children as soldiers, including extensive participation of girls in the rebel forces, was widely reported during El Salvador’s civil war. Amongst former child soldiers surveyed for this case study, most were very young, between 7 and 13 years old, when they joined. Despite advocacy efforts to protest child recruitment and to address their needs in post-war programs, child soldiers were excluded from the peace accord and the demobilization and reintegration program. Indeed, many informants for this case study acknowledged, with regret and hindsight, that the plight of child soldiers was ignored by Salvadoran society during the peace and reconstruction process.

Nonetheless, El Salvador’s experience offers significant insights on advocacy efforts protesting the recruitment of children and on the social and economic supports vital to their reintegration. Following child soldiers six years after demobilization, this case study provides a long-term perspective on how former child soldiers have experienced the transition to civilian life. Highlights of lessons for future demobilization and reintegration programs include:

1. Civil society organizations must be supported in their efforts to prevent the recruitment of children and promote humanitarian principles;

2. Without political will and specific provision for child soldiers, they will be excluded from peace processes and demobilization programs. Such exclusion engenders bitterness and obstructs their later access to reintegration programs;

3. The role of the family is the most significant factor in social reintegration;

4. Economic reintegration requires more flexible approaches to support demobilized child soldiers’ needs for education and income generation, especially for child soldiers who have new family responsibilities after demobilization. Further, reintegration requires the inclusion of child soldiers in broader economic policies, and involvement of all actors, including donors and governments.

This case study describes the experience of child soldiers during the 12-year conflict and during the subsequent demobilization and reintegration phase as well as the efforts of some civil society organizations and to protest their recruitment and address their reintegration needs. Chapter 1 underscores the need to consider the complex

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1 The term child soldier is defined in a number of United Nations, and other references, to be anyone under 18 years of age and engaged in any capacity with an armed group. Programs and reporting on El Salvador often used the term ‘youth combatants’ instead of child soldiers. Such terms help address emotive issues and terminology concerning child soldiers. Both the term ‘child’ and ‘youth’ are used in this case study.
context in which children may become involved in armed conflict. Multiple deprivations and lack of opportunities for education, physical and social development as well as seeming ‘normaley’ of violence and hostility are highlighted as contributing to child participation. Many youth joined the rebel group in El Salvador with a deeply-felt desire to ‘fight for a better life’.

Chapter 2 exposes missed opportunities of advocacy and consultant recommendations towards including child soldiers in the demobilization and reintegration plans negotiated during the peace process. A belated effort to negotiate access to benefits for some former child soldiers over 15 years is described in chapter 4 on reintegration. Chapter 4 goes on to highlight lessons learned from psychosocial programs reaching some child soldiers outside of the formal reintegration program framework. Local NGOs concluded that the social context, such as maintenance of family ties and community support, and education were the supports most needed by former child soldiers.

The impact of the exclusion of child soldiers from the demobilization and reintegration programs is followed up in chapter 5. This chapter discusses the ongoing bitterness felt by former child soldiers and the obstacles they have faced in the transition to civilian life. Significantly, 70.7 percent of former child soldiers surveyed reported that ‘nothing’ was available in the way of education or economic transition supports towards their reintegration. On a more positive note, 84 percent reported that their family was the most helpful factor in their social reintegration. This result was unexpected since 41.6 percent lost one or both parents in the civil war. The longer term follow up of child soldiers provided by this case study underscores the need for both social and economic supports, with family reunification and education and income generation being the most fundamental to effective reintegration of child soldiers.

The methodology for this case study included literature reviews and field work in 1998 and 1999. Interviews were conducted with government, United Nations and NGO representatives engaged in demobilization and more general children’s programs. Focus groups were held with former combatants, local NGOs, and teams of community workers, including youth workers, involved in psychosocial, youth and community health programs. The follow-up survey was implemented between December 1998 and January 1999 by UCA, the José Simeón Cañas Universidad Centroamericana, and involved 293 former child soldiers, among whom 33.1 percent were female. The survey respondents were from 71 communities, across 11 of the country’s 14 national departments.

2 The author organized the survey in collaboration with UNICEF El Salvador to gather data on child soldiers that was otherwise virtually absent in El Salvador and to explore the longer-term reintegration experience of child soldiers. Drawing on the unique collaboration between their social research, human rights and social work departments, the UCA Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP) was commissioned to implement the survey. The survey instrument featured a 132-point questionnaire of both closed and open questions and is included in the annexes.
Chapter 1: Background

The civil war in El Salvador officially lasted from 1980 to 1992, but stemmed from more than a century of violent and repressive rule by the oligarchy and the army. Since the country’s independence from Spain in 1821, demands for political and economic rights by popular movements of peasants, students, workers and minorities were met by terror and violence. El Salvador’s history of oligarchic control -- set against the lack of land rights (common land was officially expropriated in 1882), poverty, and debt for the peasant majority -- follows the same path of repression and resistance as its neighbors in Central America.

The resistance frequently cited the 1932 massacre, La Matanza, of approximately 30,000 peasants carried out in pre-emptive retaliation for a planned revolt as the pivotal event. Among those killed was the communist peasant leader Augustín Farabundo Martí, whose name and cause was assumed by the rebel coalition FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí Liberación Nacional) some 50 years later.

The trigger to civil war is considered to be March 16, 1980, when Archbishop Romero, while saying mass, was assassinated by a death squad in the capital San Salvador. Such human rights violations became a prominent feature of the civil war. By 1980, five guerrilla organizations consolidated under a united command structure, the FMLN, and in January 1981, the FMLN launched its first military offensive.

The civil war was marked by FMLN guerrilla tactics in urban areas, while the FAES (Forces Armada de El Salvador) and death squads targeted the civilian support base. Heavy repression by the government was especially devastating during the first phase of the war. More than 17,000 people were reported assassinated between 1981 and 1983. By 1983, 70,000 Salvadorans were in the Mesa Grande refugee camp in Honduras. Through the early phases of the war, 890,000 fled to Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States, and about 500,000 were internally displaced. Around 75,000 people died during the civil war.

History and pattern of child recruitment

Salvadoran law provides for compulsory military service, with 18 years as the legal age of recruitment. During the civil war, emergency legislation allowed voluntary enlistment from the age of 16. It is widely known that both the FAES and FMLN recruited children, including those under 16.

The FAES has been most reluctant to acknowledge the participation of children, but veterans estimate that up to 80 percent were recruited under 18 years of age with many youth enlisted “informally.” One man involved in a veterans association reported that he was recruited at age 15 while walking to school, and that the FAES regularly came in trucks to take all youth who looked physically old enough. Most former

3 The 1993 UN Truth Commission found that 85% of human rights violations were by agencies of the State and 5% by FMLN.
soldiers who were recruited as youth report that they were recruited during mass conscription drives from buses, schools, and urban gathering places such as movie theaters and football grounds. A mother’s association, CODEFAM, reported a few cases where families who resisted the recruitment of their sons were killed.

New recruits received an average of three to four months training before their first operation. FAES soldiers were paid 80 colones (about US $10) per month for their first two years of service. Many deserted after this, but one informant reported that he stayed with the military because he was promoted to sergeant with a salary of 520 colones per month.

The FAES also had mechanic workshops where children and youth could participate if they signed a three-year contract for training and service. While women and girls openly participated in the FMLN, there is only one report of an FAES battalion of 160 women, including some girls under 18, which formed voluntarily in 1983 in San Miguel. The battalion was disbanded quickly due to health problems and pregnancies, according to reports.

Children and youth did not actively serve with the complementary forces of the National Guard, National Police, Treasury Police, or civilian defense efforts but there were many reports of children serving as messengers and informers.

In addition, children “orphaned” during military operations were taken by FAES units. Since the civil war, investigations have identified illegal adoption rings used by senior FAES officers. The New York Times featured the work of Pro-Busqueda, a national NGO founded by a dedicated Jesuit priest. Of hundreds of cases, this NGO identified at least 20 ‘disappeared’ children still with military families, but most had gone to foreign adoption agencies. An estimated 2,000 such adoptions took place during the war.

The participation of children, and significant numbers of women, in the FMLN is much more openly acknowledged. ONUSAL (the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador) has calculated that approximately 1,500 to 1,600 FMLN forces were under 18 years of age. A FMLN NGO, the January 16 Foundation (F-16), estimated that as many as 2,000 FMLN combatants were under 18.

FMLN recruitment was forcible as well as voluntary. Many families joined the FMLN movement as a protection strategy following forced flight or intimidation by the FAES. Many youth “grew up” with the FMLN, helping with food preparation, sanitation, nursing, messenger services, and other support functions. There were a few reports of orphans being taken by the FMLN to refugee camps to be trained. Children generally could become combatants in the FMLN from age 10, but the more common age to assume

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5 The NGO Fundacion 16 de Enero, known as F-16 and named for the date of the Peace Accord, was founded to represent the FMLN in the reconstruction and integration negotiations and programs.
fighting roles was 14 or 15.

The UCA/UNICEF follow-up survey of former child soldiers reveals the very young ages at which children joined, and reflects the different recruitment patterns of the FAES and FMLN.

### Table 1: Recruitment patterns of FAES and FMLN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at time of joining</th>
<th>10 years or less</th>
<th>Between 10 and 14 years</th>
<th>15 years or older</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>15.8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the FMLN youth surveyed, 91.7 percent reported that they joined voluntarily, whereas only 46.7 percent of the FAES youth reported that they joined voluntarily. Of the total that joined voluntarily, 60 percent were very young, between the ages of 7 and 13 years, when they joined.

In a 1995 study on FMLN youth combatants, F-16 emphasized that the conflict violated the rights of all affected children. 6 Violations decried by F-16 included:

- The inadequate environment for physical, psychological and social development;
- The lack of education and play opportunities for intellectual and social development;
- Deprivations of nutrition and health care; and
- Ongoing terror, insecurity and powerlessness in a context where destruction, violence and hostility seem to be accepted by adults as normal life.

The F-16 study noted that separation from families and support structures accentuated the impact of these violations. Hundreds of schools were closed during the civil war either because they were destroyed or due to safety concerns for teachers and students. In 1985 alone, the government closed 400 schools in areas where the FMLN was active. The number of schools closed throughout the country and throughout the civil war totaled 730.

Many youth became child soldiers voluntarily in response to the above violations. Many joined the FMLN for personal reasons of survival, revenge and commitment, as well as in response to social factors, according to the F-16 report. These reasons included:

- To stop being defenseless victims, especially where close family members had disappeared, were assassinated, or were separated in the course of displacement;
- To avoid extreme poverty and seek income for their family;
- To establish an identity, especially where communities placed a high value on being a combatant; and
- To be an active participant in a process seen as transforming their country.

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6 The 1995 F-16 study, entitled “Los Ninos y Jóvenes Ex-Combatientes en su Proceso de Reinserción a la Vida Civil”, was prepared with the support of a UCA psychologist and Save the Children Sweden. The report was developed from a survey on the mental health of 528 child ex-combatants of the FMLN. The survey was carried out in 4 former conflict zones through methodologies of group interviews, drawing sessions and games.
The F-16’s findings are corroborated by the survey data for this case study. Overall, 89.4 percent of the youth interviewed said that they had joined voluntarily:

- To fight for a better life;
- In hopes of a more just society; and
- Out of “necessity,” due to loss of family, or following an older brother or sister.

Such motivations, outlined in Table 2, also reflect the strong ideological commitment that many young combatants had to the FMLN’s cause.

### Table 2: Motivations for joining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>FMLN</th>
<th>FAES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fight for a better life</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a fair society</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she liked it</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defend the country</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of family member</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow his/her siblings</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t have a choice</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends invited to join</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The UCA/UNICEF follow-up survey also found that most had direct experience of violence. In reporting the worst thing that happened to them during the war, 36.9 percent of former child soldiers said that it was the death of a family member (or members), or witnessing the death of a comrade; 15.7 percent reported that it was being wounded or disabled, and 14 percent said that it was witnessing attacks and bombings. A significant proportion, 27.6 percent, of former child soldiers suffer from a physical disability (including hearing and vision losses) caused by the conflict.
Chapter 2: Prevention and missed opportunities in the peace process

Advocacy efforts in El Salvador illustrate some of the possible avenues to prevent and protest recruitment, and gain recognition for child soldiers in demobilization and reintegration programs. Despite some success in protesting recruitment abuses and early recommendations to include underage combatants in demobilization and reintegration program, the needs and rights of child soldiers largely were ignored in El Salvador. Advocacy efforts and recommendations to include children failed to mobilize political will at a high enough level during the peace negotiations and demobilization planning. El Salvador’s experience highlights the need to work closely with the broad range of actors engaged in the peace process and demobilization planning, as well as the need to support civil society in protecting children.

2.1 Nascent efforts at preventing the recruitment of children

In El Salvador, there were many instances where civil society sought to prevent and protest the recruitment of children. Many officials and organizations acknowledged that, while they knew child recruitment was against Salvadoran law and international treaty obligations, the circumstances of a civil war created “too many other things to worry about.” Yet, a number of groups overcame the fear of speaking out and made efforts to protest the recruitment of children, despite the history of violent repression of unions and other associations.

Civil society organizations, such as the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES), women’s rights and mother’s associations (COMADRES and CODEFAM) undertook a number of measures to protest child recruitment. They took testimony from mothers whose sons had been forcibly recruited, organized demonstrations and hunger strikes, and appealed to the parliament and army leadership. They had some success; for example, in 1991, COMADRES achieved the liberation of 50 minors who had been forcibly recruited by the FAES. In some cases, these organizations also helped individual families bribe military officials into releasing their sons.

The Catholic Church played a very significant role. Like COMADRES’s 1991 action, Church officials helped many individual families protest the forced recruitment of their minor sons. The most active Church office, and one of the most active human rights organizations, was the Tutela Legal (Legal Protection Office) of the Archbishop of San Salvador. The Tutela Legal documented cases of human rights violations and supported families in their legal battles.

7 Committee of Mothers of Prisoners, the Disappeared and Murdered Political Activists.
rights violations, promoted awareness, supported public speaking by Bishops, and made site visits to barracks. The Tutela Legal handled thousands of cases, and their files were invaluable sources of objective and accurate human rights reporting for the UN Truth Commission in 1993. However, child recruitment was not documented as a specific category of human rights violations, and the Tutela Legal lacked the necessary resources to catalogue their documentation.

The Tutela Legal primarily intervened directly with FAES commanders at barracks to release underage youth taken in recruitment drives. It undertook fewer interventions with the FMLN. Access to the FMLN leadership was difficult, and the participation of children more often was perceived as voluntary. However, the Tutela Legal did intervene in cases of recruitment from refugee and internally displaced areas where it felt the FMLN was targeting children in violation of human rights principles.

During the second half of the civil war, before the UN human rights mandate took effect in 1991, the Church launched public campaigns to ‘humanize’ the conflict. These campaigns promoted humanitarian principles, human rights, and Christian ethics about protecting the lives of civilians. While the government and FMLN leaders paid little heed to the efforts of the Church, human rights organizations credit the effort with raising grassroots awareness of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions that children under 15 should not participate in hostilities. (The El Salvador civil war largely precedes the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.) The Church advocated traditional and Christian positions such as:

- Children are innocent victims;
- Children are free of suspicion;
- Children have a right to life; and
- Children represent a path to peace.

However, the above advocates did not take general stands against the participation of children as soldiers. They protested cases of forcible recruitment, but did not denounce voluntary participation. Until the UN human rights team was deployed during the last year of the conflict, none of these civil society movements were supported by international agencies in preventing child recruitment.

Advocacy on forcible recruitment did generate a notable policy shift within the FMLN. Interviews for this case study revealed that, in 1987, at least one faction of the FMLN took a policy decision to stop forcible recruitment and offered unconditional release to all youth. A common tactic of FMLN recruitment was to force groups of young boys and girls to go with them after speeches calling for communities to join the armed insurgence. While communities were largely sympathetic to the FMLN’s messages, many disagreed with its violence, and few joined the rebel movement unless they felt directly threatened by the army. The FMLN’s tactics of forcing groups of youth to participate was ultimately counter-productive in its effort to expand popular support, as it met with resentment and anger.

It is important to note that the FMLN’s policy decision concerned forcible recruitment, not the participation of children per se. Not all youth accepted the release offer. Many were fully indoctrinated about the need
for armed struggle against what they saw as social and personal injustices. Children and youth who volunteered to join the FMLN were still supported, and often encouraged, by their communities.

A small number of international agencies -- including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), and the UN human rights team -- tried to address the use of children. The ICRC protested cases of child recruitment in the course of its interventions regarding prisoners of war. Specifically when children were detained on suspicion of helping the FMLN or were captured while serving as messengers or injured in fighting, and were intimidated and tortured for information.

UNHCR intervened in some cases by supporting refugee status in other countries for persons fleeing recruitment and by backing those resisting recruitment from refugee camps. In interviews for this case study, it was reported that refugees in Honduran camps faced the prospect of “aging in” to recruitment for the FMLN, and that UNHCR worked actively to promote third-country resettlement or other expedient geographic moves of youth and their families. Family members often risked their lives to protest their child’s recruitment. However, UNHCR’s actions were based on individual families’ requests, and were not pursued as a child protection measure.

Late in the conflict, the UN human rights team also protested individual cases of child recruitment. Following the 1990 San Jose Agreement on Human Rights, both parties to the conflict consented to be monitored on their commitments to human rights and humanitarian principles. The San Jose Agreement provided a unique opportunity for those concerned with child rights, as both sides were trying to improve their international images. Although ONUSAL did limited work on child rights, it verified and protested many cases of child recruitment and undertook a special investigation of imprisoned youth.

2.2 Planning for the peace accords - Missed opportunities for child soldiers

The peace negotiations and demobilization planning were critical moments for child advocates. The early deployment of the UN human rights team brought attention to underage recruitment violations. The recommendations of a consultant team included the need to focus reintegration supports on underage combatants. Unfortunately, these early recommendations on child soldiers in the demobilization planning were ignored.

Summary of the peace negotiations - Points of opportunity for child soldiers

Peace negotiations were ongoing from almost the beginning of the civil war. The first efforts were part of regional peace initiatives led by Honduras, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela, prompted by concern for the political, economic, and humanitarian impact of the conflicts in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. 8

8 The most noted meetings were the Contadora Group in 1983 and the Esquipulas Guatemala meeting in 1987.
The El Salvador peace process began to solidify in September 1989 when a framework was agreed under UN auspices in Mexico City. In May 1990, the parties were brought together for the first time, in Caracas, Venezuela by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General.

To the surprise of many, negotiations progressed well and culminated in the 26 July 1990 San Jose Agreement on Human Rights. This codified the commitment of both sides to human rights as recognized in El Salvador domestic law, international treaty obligations, and declarations and principles approved by the UN or the Organization of American States. Both parties consented to be monitored.

In May 1991, the UN Security Council established the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador -- ONUSAL -- to monitor all agreements concluded between the government and the FMLN. ONUSAL was launched on 26 July 1991.

The San Jose Agreement endowed the UN with wide-ranging verification powers. In addition to working with a new National Civilian Police and Human Rights Ombudsman office -- which included a Children’s Rights Ombudsman -- ONUSAL’s purpose was to investigate human rights violations and to take appropriate steps to promote and defend human rights. Unfortunately, work on child recruitment by ONUSAL in 1991 was not supported by the political hierarchy involved in the peace negotiations. Political commitment to respond to child recruitment violations or action by the Ombudsman’s office could have focused attention on the needs and rights of child soldiers in the emerging peace accords and subsequent demobilization.

The final peace accords were signed on 16 January 1992 at Chapultepec, Mexico.

**Early recommendations to include child soldiers in demobilization and reintegration plans**

In late 1989, UN officials and donors began preparations for demobilization and reintegration by commissioning consultant teams and holding discussions with government, FAES and FMLN officials. Under funding from USAID, Creative Associates International, a consulting firm known in El Salvador by the acronym CREA, conducted a survey of combatants and make recommendations for reintegration programs. Significantly, the survey was conducted a year before the peace accord -- between December 1990 and February 1991.

The result sent a clear message that the majority of future ex-combatants would be under 20 years old, with many under 15. It is not clear why the survey used the age groupings of 15 to 20 years when 18 years is

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the age of majority in El Salvador. 10 The age grouping does reflect societal perceptions about child and youth development.

As illustrated in Table 3, the CREA survey warned that the majority of ex-combatants would be young, would have low education levels, and would reintegrate into marginalized, poor sectors in rural areas. The report emphasized that many of the social and economic conditions that gave rise to the conflict continued to afflict the country -- unequal land distribution, the need for political reform, and low education levels. Mid- and higher-level officers, who were older and better educated, would be “self-integrating,” according to the report. Therefore, CREA recommended that program strategies focus on the needs of child soldiers. The percentages provided in the table are those reported in the 1991 CREA survey.

Table 3: 1991 CREA profile of combatants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile Factor</th>
<th>FAES Officers</th>
<th>FAES Mid-Level</th>
<th>FAES Soldiers</th>
<th>Other Forces (State)</th>
<th>FMLN Leaders</th>
<th>FMLN Soldiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Under 15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 15 – 20 years</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) 21 – 24 years</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) 25 and older</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Male</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Female</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Literate</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Illiterate</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Completed Primary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Completed Secondary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) University level</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Urban</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Rural</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Married</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Single</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Age differentiation should also have followed national law establishing 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment and the emergency legislation authorizing volunteers at 16 years. Age differentiation at 15 years follow the Geneva Conventions and later Article 38 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
CREA’s reintegration program recommendations emphasized municipal level management structures, civilian involvement, and expanding existing projects for basic services and displaced communities. They suggested information and job counseling offices for each municipality, and recommended that a central coordinating body be created with representation from all sectors to ensure trust and accountability. Reintegration options recommended by CREA included:

- Supporting job creation through municipal public works projects;
- Combining public works projects with literacy, basic education, and other training opportunities;
- Providing individual apprenticeships with businesses and trade groups;
- Expanding non-formal education and training opportunities, including supporting mobile training teams from experienced San Salvador institutions;
- Providing subsidies to support crop production by new farmers; and
- Offering land entitlement.

The 1991 CREA survey findings were borne out by the 1999 UCA/UNICEF follow-up survey. This survey of former FMLN and FAES child soldiers found that:

- 58 percent of the combatants were between 13 and 16 years old as of the 1992 demobilization, 9 percent were 12 years old or younger, and 33 percent were 17 or older;
- Child soldiers were 67 percent male and 33 percent female; all girls were in the FMLN;
- 25.1 percent had no education, 37.8 percent had completed 1st, 2nd or 3rd grade, 33.7 percent had completed 4th, 5th or 6th grade, and only 3.4 percent had completed schooling at the 7th, 8th or 9th grade level; and
- 91 percent had lived with at least one parent and their siblings before the conflict, but 57 percent of the FMLN and 50 percent of the FAES combatants reported that their family situation changed after the conflict.

Human rights reports on child recruitment, CREA data, and recommendations by a major donor (USAID) involved in the peace negotiations and demobilization planning all provided ample opportunities to acknowledge the role of child soldiers and plan for supporting them during demobilization and reintegration. However, the programs that were created emphasized the politically expedient approach of enticing officers to support the peace process rather than the needs and rights of child soldiers facing a difficult transition to civilian life.
Chapter 3: Demobilization – summary of the official program

The January 1992 peace accords called for demobilizing the FMLN, and a reduction of troops and return to civilian authority for the FAES. Reintegration assistance was to be negotiated as part of the government’s forthcoming National Reconstruction Plan. The peace accords simply called for programs to reincorporate FMLN combatants into civilian life.

The accords called for a cease-fire, separation of forces, termination of the FMLN’s military structure, and a return to the FAES’ peace-time strength during the nine months between 1 February and 31 October 1992. Although the timetable was renegotiated in June and August, the UN Secretary-General could report that the armed conflict had officially ended on 15 December 1992, and that legislative action to legalize the FMLN as a political party was in place. The so-called “re-calendarizations” of June and August were due in part to FMLN delays in demobilization carried out in protest against the government’s non-compliance with its political reform obligations and the recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Truth Commission.

The FMLN was to send its troops to 15 concentration areas throughout the country, established and monitored by ONUSAL. In the end, there were 18 concentration areas. These were not precise geographical sites but featured some 68 “groupings” of FMLN combatants. The first demobilization, 20 percent of the forces, was effective by 1 July 1992, a second 20 percent was demobilized on 20 September 1992, a third 20 percent on 30 October, and the remaining troops demobilized by 15 December 1992. ONUSAL reported that 3,285, or 38 percent, of the demobilized FMLN combatants were women.

While the 1991 CREA survey estimated that 64 percent of FMLN combatants were under 20 years old, ONUSAL reported that 1,500 to 1,600 of the FMLN’s 8,552 demobilized soldiers, or about 18 percent, were under 18. ONUSAL reported that there were 105 FMLN youth between 11 and 15 years of age in the concentration areas. Some former FMLN child soldiers alleged that ONUSAL did not allow those under 15 to participate in the formal demobilization process, but many did participate and the policy taken by ONUSAL remains unclear.

FAES troops were to be reduced to a force size of 31,000 -- half of their wartime forces. Demobilization began with the incorporation of other security forces, such as the National Guard and Hacienda Police, in January 1992. The next phase was to dissolve the Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions, or BIRI. These battalions had committed some of the most egregious human rights abuses during the civil war. The BIRI were dissolved between July and December 1992. Subsequent FAES troop reduction took place between January and March 1993.

ONUSAL’s mandate was to verify that FAES troops were confined to barracks and that force strength

11 The 5 battalions were: BIRI Beloso, BIRI Atonal, BIRI Atlacatl, BIRI Bracamonte, and BIRI Arce. The Atacatl battalion in particular was implicated in the 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests in San Salvador in retaliation for advances by the FMLN. These murders outraged international opinion and resulted in the US Congress to challenge US military aid to El Salvador; causing US officials to push seriously for a negotiated settlement for the first time.
was reduced. FAES estimated that 2,100 troops were demobilized in dissolving the BIRI and 19,500 regular troops were demobilized. ONUSAL did not review FAES registries for age or other details. FAES reported that no child soldiers were demobilized. In media reports and interviews for this case study, FAES officers insisted that if there were soldiers under 18 years of age, they were all at least 16 and had joined voluntarily. However, many former soldiers report that child soldiers were demobilized before the formal process in order to avoid attention to their presence. There is virtually no record of their participation.

3.1 Programs for the FMLN concentration areas

ONUSAL, with the assistance of the UN Development Program (UNDP), established 18 concentration areas for the reception, registration, disarmament, and demobilization of FMLN combatants. The areas were in a semi-rural setting, where the combatants were confined pending formal demobilization.

UNDP was requested quite late to support the material and program needs of the concentration areas. The FMLN requested the support of ONUSAL and UNDP for the concentration areas in February 1992, and UNDP formulated an emergency appeal by 5 March 1992. The appeal established a Trust Fund of more than $3 million. The European Community provided funding, again of more than $3 million, directly to the implementing NGOs. The Emergency Program for Persons in Process of Demobilization in El Salvador, aimed to provide basic living conditions for FMLN soldiers during their encampment, and provided shelter, food, health care, and literacy and basic education.

Under the UNDP program, MSF implemented the basic infrastructure component, including potable water systems, latrines, temporary shelters, dining and kitchen areas, and health care centers. UNDP supplied a mattress for each ex-combatant to complement beds provided by the European Community. MSF provided two doctors and four technicians to support immediate first-aid needs. The Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) implemented the primary health care component of the program.

The PAHO/WHO project did not begin until 20 July 1992, after the first phase of demobilization. However, by August, more than 6,000 FMLN members had received medical examinations; 27.6 percent required specialized treatment. PAHO and the WHO quickly realized that disabilities and other war-related injuries were inadequately anticipated by the project. As cholera, malaria, dengue, and other diseases were present in the region, the absence of epidemic diseases in the concentration areas was considered a major accomplishment.

The food aid component was implemented through CARITAS and the January 16 Foundation. The World Food Program (WFP) calculated food requirements and provided monitoring. A two-month food ration was provided to each combatant upon demobilization.

The last project approved through UNDP, in June 1992, was education. This project, which provided literacy and basic education courses in some 70 classrooms established in the concentration areas, was
agreed upon with the Ministry of Education and implemented by the University of El Salvador and F-16.

FMLN troops carried out surveillance, food preparation and nursing support activities during encampment. Of the former FMLN child soldiers interviewed, 28 percent reported that patrol duty was their most significant activity during encampment, and 19 percent reported working as a cook. Another 22 percent indicated that training and remedial academic classes were the most significant activity. Although UNDP activities were inconsistently established in the concentration areas, the majority of former FMLN child soldiers followed up for this case study reported accessing support projects.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities accessed in FMLN concentration areas</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy or academic equivalency</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling about reinsertion programs</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skill orientation courses</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations or Credits</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These activities occurred before the reintegration program outlined under the National Reconstruction Plan.

The fact that the El Salvador demobilization exercise was extended only one and half months beyond the original date of 31 October 1992 is now considered a success compared to other countries. ONUSAL verified the completion of the FMLN demobilization exercise as of 15 December 1992. Of the former FMLN child soldiers interviewed for this case study, 43.6 percent reported being in a concentration area for six months or less, and 53.5 percent remained in the camp between seven and 12 months.

3.2. Program actions for FAES during confinement to barracks

The FAES was to provide similar activities and supports to its troops during their confinement to barracks. While there is no available reporting, the former FAES child soldiers from the UNICEF/UCA survey who were confined to barracks confirm that such activities took place. Half reported receiving literacy or academic equivalency support. Another four reported receiving counseling about the reintegration program, and two said that they received vocational training.

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12 Six of the former FAES child soldiers participating in the survey were confined to barracks. The remainder were demobilized separately as war wounded.
Chapter 4: Reintegration – the official program and belated negotiations for child soldiers

The international community provided significant assistance for post-conflict recovery in El Salvador. UNDP initiated a regional program, which lasted from 1989 to 1995, known as PRODERE (Development Program for Refugees, Displaced and Repatriated Persons in Central America), which focused on war-affected areas. It is considered the first development program to include a human rights component.

In a related effort, UNHCR initiated CIREFCA, or the International Conference on Central American Refugees. CIREFCA supported the revitalization of returnee communities, and is credited with initiating the community-based rehabilitation scheme known as QIPs, or Quick Impact Projects.

PRODERE was later integrated into CIREFCA, with UNDP taking over the lead agency role from UNHCR in 1993. Both processes are credited with linking relief, rehabilitation and development efforts, and with having a substantial impact on reconciliation in Central America.

UNICEF raised the profile of children’s concerns through a mine-awareness program -- Proyecto de Prevencion de Accidentes por Minas y Artefactos Explosivos, or PAM -- that involved collaboration with military leaders from both the FAES and FMLN. Between January and May 1992, 16 deaths and 86 injuries due to mines were reported; 75 percent of the victims were children. ONUSAL lead mine mapping and placing warning signs for the PAM project while UNICEF developed an awareness campaign featuring classroom materials, radio and television messages, and a mobile team of trainers.

The high profile of post-conflict support to El Salvador offered many opportunities to incorporate the specific needs and rights of child soldiers. Unfortunately, those needs were largely excluded.

4.1 The formal reintegration program and results

The 1992 peace accords required the government, in consultation with the FMLN, to implement a reintegration program for all ex-combatants. Following an Executive Decree on 30 January 1992, the demobilization aspects of the National Reconstruction Plan (NRP) were administered by the Secretariat for National Reconstruction (Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional, or SRN). The SRN administered the reintegration program and other programs targeted to an estimated 45,000 combatants from regular and irregular military and security forces. Other programs were intended to rehabilitate

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13 While the SRN was given cabinet level status, the SRN and overall NRP were implemented under the Ministry of Planning. The majority of NRP financing ($943 million of which some $298 million was for the SRN) was oriented to initiatives such as bridge and hydroelectric repairs and a poverty alleviation program of the Inter-American Development Bank. In fact, USAID was the sole donor to the SRN as other donors, in particular the EEC, were concerned that the SRN excluded of the interests of the beneficiary population. Proposals were originally proffered that UNDP serve as the funding intermediary rather than a direct government agency.

14 This estimate included 20,000 FMLN and FAES combatants, other forces and some 20,000 tenedores – political, as opposed to combatants, members of the FMLN. Other forces and paramilitary entities were the BIRI, National Police and related security forces such as the Treasury Police, narcotics and border forces, civilian defense units, the National...
target municipalities in conflict-affected areas, where beneficiaries would largely be returning refugees and others who had been internally displaced.

The SRN had a five-year mandate, from 1992 through 1996, following the term of the NRP. The SRN established field offices in each of the El Salvador’s 14 departments, and, at its peak, had 380 staff members.

The National Reconstruction Plan, which included elements to be administered by the SRN, was quickly prepared for the first donors meeting -- the Consultative Group of Donors for El Salvador, led by the World Bank -- in March 1992. It had an initial requirement of $1.528 billion. Lengthy negotiations led to a first draft of the reintegration program in September 1992, three months after the first FMLN demobilization. Evaluators have noted that, in developing the reintegration program, the requirement to “take into account” the recommendations of the FMLN was not adhered to, and there were no provisions for the participation of beneficiaries.

Major donors, with USAID the largest, and the United Nations played critical roles in facilitating the negotiations establishing the reintegration program and its implementation. UNDP assumed a leadership role in coordinating donor activities and served as a neutral party in resolving implementation issues between the SRN and demobilizing forces. ONUSAL met with the SRN, FAES, and F-16 (representing the FMLN) every one to two weeks to facilitate ongoing negotiations, address implementation issues, and coordinate the reintegration program.

The SRN’s relationship with NGOs was a difficult implementation issue. NGOs were strongly affiliated to either the FMLN or the government ARENA party. During the civil war, as areas of the country fell under FMLN control, many NGOs were launched to meet emergency humanitarian needs, and they became the only providers of health, education, and other basic services. The mandate of the SRN included promoting NGOs to implement the NRP, but government mistrust of FMLN-associated organizations obstructed many projects. A number of NGOs participating in focus groups for this case study reported that the SRN rejected their project proposals for reintegrating combatants.

Mistrust between the SRN and NGOs was mutual, as the SRN was created from a former government counterinsurgency agency, the Commission for the Restoration of Areas, or CONARA, which was active during the 1980s. The role of USAID was also regarded warily by many NGOs due to US assistance to the military during the civil war. UN and donor assistance in the negotiations finally helped

Lesson Learned:
A neutral coordination body

The lack of a neutral coordination body in the El Salvador Reinsertion Program prevented appropriate NGO partnerships and caused delays in project approval and implementation. Such contentions with the coordination body fueled mistrust between the government and FMLN in a crucial time of the transition to peace.

Guard and what was known as the Hacienda Police. While this case study focuses on FAES and FMLN demobilization in looking at child soldiers, there were child participants in the other forces, most notably the civilian defense operations. Information on child participation is partly unclear because all of these other forces were incorporated into the FAES before the demobilization such that demobilization data is simply provided as that of FAES forces.
ensure some NGO participation towards reaching more rural and marginalized ex-combatants and other beneficiaries.

One mechanism used was to support NGO projects through umbrella mechanisms. SRN reports show that the Reintegration Program included “sombrilla” arrangements through FEDISAL (85 projects), UNDP (21 projects), Catholic Relief Services (19 projects), and F-16 (6 projects).

The reintegration program included three tracks: a “rural” agricultural option, an “urban” option of industry and services training and credits, and some scholarship programs. Other specialized SRN programs included funds for the war-wounded and families of those who died in conflict, a police demobilization program, and a special program for selected leaders of the FMLN, which was added later.

The SRN’s final report, in April 1996, indicated that the total cost of the reintegration program was 3,097 million colones (approximately $356 million) -- 1,745 million colones from international assistance and 1,352 million colones funded through government resources that included international loans. 15

"Rural Option": Agriculture Reintegration Program

The “rural option” was considered the most vital given the fact that landless poverty was a major cause of the civil war. 16 The Agricultural Reintegration Program offered agricultural training and toolkits followed by land transfers through the Program for Transference of Lands (PTT). Credits for initial production needs and technical assistance followed. Housing materials and latrines were provided. Beneficiaries received a monthly living allowance, equivalent to the minimum wage, during the months of training, and WFP provided a family food ration.

The land transfer program was expected to reach the vast majority of ex-combatants from both sides, and was expanded to include landless peasants who occupied abandoned lands during the civil war. Such peasants, known as tenedores, were estimated at 20,000, and were considered part of the political support of the FMLN.

PTT credits were for loans of 30,000 colones ($3,450) at 6 percent interest with a 20-year repayment.

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16 Access to land is still considered the principal source of endemic poverty for the more than 70% of the Salvadoran population living outside the capital, San Salvador. (Boyce 1997)
period. The processing of lands available for “transfer” was complicated and slow. As the PTT received an area of land -- from private holders or government land holdings -- for “transfer,” they did not have the capacity to divide the land into individual holdings. Groups of individuals had to be organized until they comprised, with each individual’s maximum credit, the total amount needed for the land. Married male and female ex-combatants were in some cases assigned to different groups.

After 18 months in operation, the SRN had disbursed only 40 percent of its approved funding, with none going to the land transfer program. The SRN’s final report showed that 5,264 former FMLN combatants and 7,807 former FAES combatants received land credits, and that 471 FMLN and 55 FAES cases were still pending.

Credits for initial production needs such as seeds and irrigation equipment were an additional component of the “rural option.” Loans of 15,580 colones maximum were provided at 14 percent interest with a five-year repayment period. The SRN reported 6,242 former FMLN beneficiaries and 6,754 former FAES beneficiaries.

The training component of the “rural option” was led by UNDP and started in November 1992. UNDP directly provided training courses for FMLN participants, while the government gave courses for FAES participants. UNDP courses were for five months, with the aim of concluding before the next agricultural cycle in the spring of 1993. Training took place in 49 different centers, and featured practical activities as well as administrative training in credit management.

Follow-up evaluations indicated that a large percentage of loans under the “rural option” could not be recovered. Many ex-combatants thought that the “credits” were outright grants rather than loans, and their debt exceeded their income capacities. UNDP reported that the potential debt level, with both the land transfer credits and credits for initial production, was more than 400 percent of a 1992 annual rural income.

The low income potential was partly due to the poor productive quality of the land “transferred” and an unfortunate two years of drought. Evaluations of the program recommended that it would have been more efficient and productive to provide an initial cash payment and then a more carefully developed program of credits and training.

Other factors in the poor performance of the “rural option” have particular relevance for child soldiers. Many land allocations were organized by demobilizing groups who, especially in the case of child soldiers, had no agricultural experience, few skills, and little familiarity with rural life. Because of their inexperience, they were especially ill-prepared to assume such high debt levels. Groups of youth who demobilized as comrades had spent their development years as soldiers. They had not learned agricultural skills and lacked many of the rural traditions and community organizing patterns so important in Salvadoran society.

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17 Information on the PTT, and the quote in the box, are primarily drawn from the report, “The Debate on Post-War Economic Recovery in El Salvador”, May 1994, Hemisphere Initiatives. (See bibliography.)
"Urban Option": Industry and Service Program

The Industry and Service Program included vocational and business administration training followed by micro-enterprise credits and technical assistance. The vocational training period averaged six months, with 360 hours of vocational preparation followed by 60 hours of administrative training on micro-enterprise creation, cost analysis, and credit management. The most popular trades were automobile mechanics, construction mechanics, carpentry, tailoring, and electronics repair. During the training period, beneficiaries received a monthly living allowance equivalent to El Salvador’s minimum wage.

The program included specific prerequisites to be able to move from training to the credits. After approval of their vocational and administrative training, beneficiaries could apply for a micro-enterprise credit by presenting a technically and financially feasible project. The maximum individual micro-enterprise credit was equivalent to $2,400. Beneficiaries could form associations to initiate larger businesses. Final reports show 1,685 FMLN and 6,131 FAES beneficiaries of vocational training, and a subsequent 1,103 FMLN and 1,863 FAES beneficiaries of micro-enterprise credits.

Many ex-combatants later benefited from vocational training programs offered by the German Cooperation (GTZ). The GTZ training programs were held over a longer time period, 10-12 months, and were open to civilians as well as ex-combatants.

Scholarship program

A scholarship fund was established for demobilized soldiers who wished to go to high school, technical school, or university. In addition to covering fees for the school of their choice, the scholarship fund provided a living allowance, transportation expenses, and school supplies for the duration of their studies. The SRN final report shows that this fund dispensed 118,200,000 colones for 1,140 beneficiaries; 186 scholarships (120 FMLN and 66 FAES) were suspended because, among other things, many could not maintain the required academic standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: SRN reported scholarship recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The requirements for university, technical and secondary levels clearly prohibited the participation of child soldiers who, by and large, left school at the 3rd grade level as much as 10 years earlier.

Special Program for 600 FMLN leaders and mid-level commanders
A special program, modeled on the “urban option,” was negotiated directly by USAID with the FMLN. Known as the “Mandos Medios” program, it aimed to provide 600 FMLN leaders and mid-level commanders with training in vocational areas, management, and business project formulation, followed by credits to launch small-business projects. The FMLN organized three levels based on rank and whether the beneficiary was in a rural or urban setting. The three levels stipulated the monthly allowance to be received; monthly allowances ranged from $103 to $403, and the business credits ranged from $3,448 to $5,747. Final reports show 598 FMLN officials received vocational training and 419 accessed credits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th># Registered</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Credit Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2,400 to 3,500 C</td>
<td>50,000 C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1,075 to 2,100 C</td>
<td>40,000 C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>900 to 1,075 C</td>
<td>30,000 C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these options, FMLN soldiers could get household effects kits upon demobilization. Final reports show that 10,657 former FMLN combatants and political support personnel received the kits.

The FAES provided demobilized soldiers with an indemnity equivalent to one year’s salary. The government’s 1996 final report shows that 19,815 former FAES soldiers received the indemnity at a total cost of 265,300,000 colones, or an average of $1,540 each.

Independent of the SRN reintegration program, the European Community implemented a two-year, $18 million project for the reintegration of 3,000 ex-combatants in the department of Usulután. This program was essentially the “rural option” with more generous credit terms. Because of the European community’s direct involvement -- including hiring their own lawyers, agrarian experts and topographers -- land transfers to ex-combatants in the Usulután project were well ahead of the rest of the reintegration program. The project is considered more successful than the SRN reintegration program, but the European community’s exclusion of local NGOs and its original focus only on ex-combatants has been obstacles to sustainability.

**War-wounded and disabled program**

An additional component of the SRN reintegration program was a special initiative for wounded or disabled combatants and other war-affected populations -- including children or elderly parents of deceased combatants. More than 3,500 former FMLN combatants are registered with the wounded and disabled veterans association, and some 7,000 former FAES soldiers are reported to be disabled. Other reports indicate that 3,065 FAES soldiers and 1,324 FMLN lost limbs or organs.

The Emergency Medical Attention Program for Disabled provided free medical consultations, treatment, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation for FMLN ex-combatants. The program was expanded to include FAES
war wounded and disabled despite original expectations that an FAES program would cover them. One problem has been that former FAES soldiers were unable to obtain their discharge papers, which is a condition for access to the programs.

The SRN 1996 final report shows a total cost for this program of 32,500,000 colones, covering 18,910 medical consultations and 4,558 physiotherapy sessions. However, members of disabled veterans associations only realized these benefits following public protests. Former combatants of the FMLN and FAES formed special associations to facilitate services and advocate for government adherence to obligations under the peace accords. The Disabled and Handicapped War Veterans Association of El Salvador, or ASALDIG, was formed in February 1992 to represent the disabled and wounded former members of the FMLN. ALFAES, the Association of the Wounded of the Armed Forces of El Salvador, was formed in June 1992.

A May 1993 demonstration was repressed so violently by the police that one disabled veteran was killed and a number of others were injured. It was only after this incident that the Interior Minister granted legal recognition to the groups. In January 1995, after years of inaction, former soldiers occupied the Legislative Assembly and other government buildings in San Salvador for two days to press for benefits. Pensions, based on the 1994 minimum wage of 1,050 colones, finally were instituted in April 1995.

Of 80 former child soldiers who suffered some disability and who participated in this case study’s follow-up survey, only eight have received pensions or indemnity payments.

### 4.2 Later negotiation for demobilized FMLN child soldiers

While the reintegration program was developed without age stipulations, the government asserted a legal technicality prohibiting persons under 18 from accessing land transfers under the PTT. The government insisted that the peace accords were to benefit 'citizens' meaning persons at least 18 years old. This was despite the UN’s specification that beneficiaries must include those 16 years of age and older. Moreover, while ONUSAL provided identification cards for the demobilized, national identification documents were required to access legal entitlements for land. This created a prohibitive administrative requirement for many former child soldiers.

In response to complaints and requests from FMLN party leaders, an extensive re-negotiation with the SRN led to a 1993 inquiry concerning FMLN youth excluded from the land program due to their age. The inquiry was to profile and assess the needs of FMLN youth excluded from the reintegration program.

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18 FAES had created the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of the Armed Forces in 1986 to attend to all war wounded and disabled.
19 The UN Proposal on Land Transfer, 15 October 1993, specified that former fighters over 16 years of age, as of D-Day, 1 February 1992, regardless of family situation will be the beneficiaries…”.
20 Many informants describe negotiations between the Government and FMLN on the Reinsertion Program as more grueling than the peace negotiations.
21 Considering the lack of attention to earlier recommendations on child soldiers, it is interesting that any response was mounted to their struggle to access programs.
generally, even though the original complaint pertained to the land program. The SRN asked CREA to reach out to FMLN soldiers who were under 18 at the time of demobilization. CREA announced on the radio and through community outreach projects that FMLN youth should present themselves to SRN field offices for profiling. Of the 461 youth who presented themselves, 298 were male and 163 female; their average age at the time was almost 17, and the youngest was 10. All but 15 had their ONUSAL demobilization cards authenticating their status as demobilized combatants.

The survey showed that 96 young people were currently engaged in studies, but that most had abandoned their studies in the 3rd or 4th grades, making their re-enrollment in formal schooling very difficult. Only 5 of the 461 cases sought support for formal education; the remainder wanted vocational training. Sewing, mechanics, construction, and agriculture were the most frequently requested vocations selected. Because CREA assumed that many youth had been omitted by the survey, it recommended that an estimated 850 former FMLN child soldiers be offered a special reintegration program that included training or education scholarships and living assistance.

Following the inquiry, and arduous debate, compromise legislation was enacted to allow former FMLN soldiers who were between 16 and 18 at the time of the peace accords to apply for the land transfers. The Complementary Agreement of February 1993 provided that “the beneficiaries holding land under the Program for the Transference of Lands (PTT), whose age varies between 16 and 18 years, can be part of the co-operative and other associative form of property to whom land might be transferred. In these cases, it will be provided that the statutes of the said association establish that once the beneficiaries reach the age of 18 years, property which belongs to them will be transferred to them.”

Those who were 15 or 16 years old at the time of the 1992 peace agreement and ineligible for the land program under the Complementary Agreement would be supported with special education or vocational training projects. No allowance was made for those under 15 years of age or those over 16 who did not want the land transfer option.

The final list of those eligible for the negotiated options with the SRN included only 249 FMLN youth; 152 were to be enrolled in courses through the Ministry of Education and receive a package of school supplies and a food supplement of 20 pounds of beans, 10 pounds of rice and 5 pounds of milk, and 97 were to be enrolled in technical training courses being supported by the European Community or German Cooperation (GTZ) and receive the food supplement.

The report does not explain why so many chose education options when only five had wanted support for formal schooling when they were profiled. The options available to these young people were also inferior to the options available for the adult ex-combatants, who received a living allowance while attending courses.

The SRN 1996 final report shows that only 9 of the 152 youth matriculated into education courses and

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22 CREA, since the 1991 survey mentioned earlier in the case study, was funded by USAID to support the SRN field offices for implementation of the Reinsertion Program and Police Demobilization.
received the food basket. The SRN reported that 25 minors were to be enrolled in a GTZ program in Chalatenango. It is unclear what efforts were made by the SRN to re-contact the youth to ensure that they even received these benefits. The very low degree of implementation also may have been due to poor communication about the reintegration process and benefits. Virtually all NGOs and veterans participating in focus groups for this case study had never been aware of the CREA survey or of the benefits agreed on by the SRN.

4.3 Access of child soldiers to benefits

Table 6 summarizes the access of former child soldiers in the UCA/UNICEF survey to a range of benefits as part of the reintegration program, expressed as a percentage of the total respondents (293):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit (number of beneficiaries)</th>
<th>FMLN</th>
<th>FAES</th>
<th>Formally Demobilized</th>
<th>Informally Released</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Kits23 (104)</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land or land credit (44)</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural kits or seeds (60)</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance (11)</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing materials (38)</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training (23)</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education scholarships (9)24</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-enterprise credit (17)</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that relatively few child soldiers had access to supports through the reintegration program is in sharp contrast to the 1991 recommendation that the reintegration program should target youth. Yet, it is interesting to note that some of those who were released, but not officially demobilized, did access certain benefits. The fact that referral by the political-military hierarchy determined access might explain this. For example, in this study’s follow-up survey, of those who reported being released from duties and not officially demobilized:
- 9 received personal kits,
- 8 received credits or loans, and
- 5 participated in academic equivalency and vocational training programs.

4.4. Youth not included in the official demobilization

Of the former child soldiers surveyed for this case study, 62.1 percent were released from service rather than included in the formal demobilization. Their exclusion from demobilization is due in part to the view of

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23 Personal Kits included clothing, food, furniture and other household items.
24 126 of the child soldiers surveyed (45.1% of the FMLN and 12.5% of the FAES participants) reported that they had returned to school but only 9 did so with scholarships.
military leaders that programs be devoted to combatants and not those who served in support functions. UCA/UNICEF data on the functions of child soldiers reflect this differentiation between combatant and support roles.

**Table 7: Functions of child soldiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Function</th>
<th>Combatant</th>
<th>Messenger</th>
<th>Logistics</th>
<th>Cook</th>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Sanitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 1976</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976 to 1979</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1979</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demob. Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Released</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other reasons for excluding child soldiers were political expediency and a desire to minimize support obligations. The FMLN omitted hundreds of child soldiers from programs despite negotiations to include *tenedores* in the land program. Only 37.5 percent of the former FMLN child soldiers surveyed reported that they were sent to the FMLN concentration areas to participate in the formal demobilization process. As one respondent explained, “I took them food or served as a ‘correo’, then I returned to my home, and for this reason I was not demobilized.”

The FAES in particular was concerned about revelations that minors had been combatants. As the FAES was obligated to pay an indemnity equivalent to one year’s salary to all demobilized soldiers, they also may have sought to minimize such payments; according to a number of veterans who note that child soldiers were never formally listed by FAES and were released before the official demobilization.

The youth themselves resented their exclusion. Their sense of marginalization is reflected in the comments of some of the former child soldiers:

“They signed up only those they wanted to sign up and for this reason I was not signed up.”

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25 Date of birth is included to show age at the time of demobilization in 1992. Thus those born before 1976 were 17 or older at the time of demobilization, those born between 1976 and 1979 were between 13 and 16 years old and those born after 1979 were 12 years or younger.
“There is resentment among many young people that because they were minors at the time of the peace accords, they were not taken into account in the projects.”

“Because she was pregnant, she was not in the concentration site, and for this reason she was given nothing.”

4.5. Community programs outside of the reintegration program

This case study has emphasized the absence of reintegration supports available to child soldiers. This raises the question of how child soldiers may have been reached through broader community programs. NGOs participating in focus groups for this case study reported that the SRN rejected their proposals for psychosocial programs and for organizing adults to sign for benefits on behalf of youth. However, a number of NGOs initiated mental health and community development programs that contributed to the reintegration of former child soldiers.

Among the former child soldiers surveyed, 47.2 percent reported that there were community-based activities outside of the reintegration program, such as cultural activities, sports, and community health education, which helped their reintegration to civilian life. The respondents were virtually unanimous (95.6 percent) that these activities were of great help in their reintegration in community life, offering them new knowledge, teaching them to live with others and to have fun. Clearly, this confirms that actively supported programs play a positive role in meeting the adjustment challenges facing child soldiers.

Upon the reflection, informants for this case study considered psychosocial programs as essential. The F-16 study emphasized that child soldiers, during the most important years of their social, cultural, intellectual, psychological, and emotional development, had been instructed in violence and socialized in a polarized atmosphere of hostility. Countering these elements is crucial to the transition to civilian life.

The UCA/UNICEF survey included a set of questions aimed at assessing ongoing psychosocial effects on the former child soldiers. It is troubling that a majority of the former child soldiers regularly felt nervous, anxious, tired, or sad. Among the survey results, the following symptoms were shown to be always, almost always or frequently felt by the former child soldiers: 74.4 percent felt tired/sad/depressed, 84 percent thinking of events from the war, and 63.1 percent got angry easily.

However, the format and context of the follow-up survey, six years after demobilization and in an environment of chronic poverty, are not appropriate for drawing conclusions specific to their experience as child soldiers. The frequency with which one feels anxious or nervous may result from daily struggles with poverty and illness as well as from one’s war experience. Moreover, in Salvadoran society, mental health is not a specifically understood concept but considered the harmonization of physical, emotional and community well-being.

While the available psychosocial programs in El Salvador did not work specifically with child soldiers, their methodologies and experience provide further insights into the reintegration of former child soldiers. The most significant programs reaching conflict-affected communities were implemented by F-16, the School for
Mental Health Promoters program of UCA, the Association for Training and Research in Mental Health (ACISAM), and Asociacion Salvadoreana de Ayuda Integral (ASAI). 26 The work of these four NGOs accounted for more than two-thirds of the mental health work in El Salvador; the remaining thirds being psychiatric work in clinics. All four mental health programs trained and supported community-based mental health para-professionals and focused on “ex-conflict zones,” mostly reaching rural populations affiliated with the FMLN.

The four programs received financial and other support from Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), including a series of regional workshops bringing together dozens of child-focused psychosocial programs from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and in some cases Mexico, Peru and Costa Rica. The workshops generated a network of professionals and advocates. However, all four Salvadoran NGOs are now struggling to generate support from other sources; only UCA and the ACISAM program were still active at the time of the field work for this case study.

Psychologists Dr. José-Luis Henriquez and Mr. Milagros A. Méndez at UCA founded the School for Mental Health Promoters in 1992. It was funded by Rädda Barnen, and the program grew out of “children of war” projects in existence since 1989. The newly trained mental health promoters convened group therapy sessions with children between the ages of 11 to 16 in their villages and could refer special cases to the psychologists at UCA for individual treatment. UCA also carried out studies of the population affected by war.

The group therapy sessions were predicated on three key concepts: remember, reflect, and process. The objective of the sessions was to encourage remembrance, expression and reflection concerning traumatic experiences, and to process the experiences into a memory that belongs to the past. The therapy sessions were organized in groups of 10. The groups met weekly, for two to three hours, over five months. The promoters facilitated discussion among the children around six themes:

- Militarism
- Self-identity
- Family
- Community
- Religion, and
- The future.

Techniques and tools used in the sessions included drawing, making collages and masks, photos, story-telling, and dramatization. The sessions were reported to be useful for many communities.

26 ASAI is currently inactive and the author was unable to obtain information from their office in El Salvador. The NGOs office in El Salvador facilitated information on mental health programs reaching children affected by conflict in El Salvador. The NGOs, or individuals formerly working with these programs, participated in a focus group study in September 1998 and ACISAM facilitated a field visit and focus group for this case study in September 1998. The work of ACISAM is also featured in a book published by Rädda Barnen, “Assisting Children who are Psychologically Affected by War or Displacement”, 1996, by David Tolfree.
The 11-to-16 age range for the sessions limited the program’s reach to former child soldiers. The project included a 1993 survey of 400 FMLN ex-combatants, of whom 122 were children. The survey reported that only 2 percent were considered to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The UCA psychologists emphasized that the psychosocial impact of the war had to be analyzed in relation to three variables:

1. The level of contact with direct violence;
2. The social context, such as family separation or loss of loved ones, through which the war was experienced; and
3. The ideological appraisal of the war.

The report concluded that former child soldiers with the FMLN were able to mitigate negative psychosocial impacts because their strong ideological affiliation provided a means to analyze and understand the conflict. Other factors that mitigated potential trauma included the fact that whole families often joined the FMLN and the sense of solidarity fostered by the movement.

F-16 did not undertake mental health programming but participated in the Rädda Barnen regional workshops and conducted the only specific study on child soldiers, in collaboration with UCA. In addition to the mitigating factors noted above, the 1995 F-16 study concluded with recommendations on supports to help child soldiers:

- Education can be a venue for development, interaction, learning a trade, and independence. It provides orientation in post-conflict social interaction, and helps family and social relationships.
- Active support by Salvadoran society helps child soldiers become active participants in post-conflict reconstruction.
- Medical and psychological help benefit the war injured.

As the reintegration program concluded in 1996 and there was little political support for new projects, none of these recommendations were incorporated into program schemes.

ACISAM, which was founded in 1985 by psychologists to work with individual victims of torture and the marginalized slum communities of internally displaced persons around San Salvador, features a network of community-based promoters. With the 1992 peace accords, it began providing training and support to rural village promoters. Its projects remain the only operational post-conflict psychosocial activities at the community level.

ACISAM works in 27 communities through a group of eight professional facilitators. Promoters are

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27 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, is a psychological diagnosis developed in the United States for symptoms considered characteristic of persons having experienced traumatic or catastrophic events. Best practice, however, considers inappropriate cross-cultural application of the diagnosis and supports a more nuanced and inclusive psychosocial approach for work with children in armed conflict. (See Machel report, UN Doc A/51/306, for example.) A psychosocial approach is reflected in the work of the NGOs discussed in this section: for example, the role of social support and community solidarity.

28 Rural communities are estimated to have between 250 and 600 inhabitants. At a peak of their work, 1994, ACISAM was working with over 50 communities serving more than 2,200 families.
unpaid volunteers identified by their community, often through a process of election. Many are well-established in their communities, including teachers, midwives, and village committee members, but ACISAM also encourages involvement by youth and illiterate community members. The promoters are trained and supported by ACISAM facilitators. The core modules of the training included:

- Community development analysis (with village mapping as the principal method);
- Human life cycle and well-being (including the process of grief and crisis response);
- Support techniques such as listening skills and facilitating self-help groups; and
- Organization skills and coordination with other community and national level organizations.

ACISAM facilitators have developed training materials for promoters with limited literacy skills. Diagrams, comic strips, and videos encourage reflection and questioning. Role-playing games, drama and painting are emphasized as tools that promoters can use in their community work.

ACISAM promoters have engaged in a wide range of community activities, including the creation of self-help groups; organizing sports; holding community seminars to raise awareness on issues such as domestic violence, grief and loss, and alcohol abuse; organizing cultural celebrations; giving talks in schools; identifying community needs, and negotiating for resources. Promoters reported that the self-help groups have been important in addressing the widespread phenomenon of “frozen grief,” in which people were afraid to express grief or felt constrained by cultural values such as machismo. The “community self-diagnosis” is a popular, participatory exercise to examining the community’s problems, needs and resources.

The holistic, community focus of the work reflects an integrative model of mental health that draws on relationships, biological health, socio-economic and cultural factors. This approach has been used in ceremonies and other events that unite communities in understanding grief and loss from the war, and address the challenges and disappointments of reintegration and reconstruction.

Youth promoters often start by organizing sports and other recreational activities, and progressively gain the interest of young people through workshops on alcohol and drugs, sexuality, and health issues. Modest economic activities are also encouraged. One youth promoter participating in a focus group for this case study said that his main concern was the increase in drug use and delinquency, whose underlying causes are a sense of hopelessness and lack of economic opportunity.

Like the UCA program, ACISAM’s work has not aimed specifically at former child soldiers. In fact, program leaders felt that combatants, rather than civilians, were better able to process and mitigate psychosocial impacts of the war because of their ideological analysis and their active participation. However, the youth promoter noted the widespread disillusionment with the peace process. The discouraged outlook among youth noted by the UCA/UNICEF survey raises the question of how child soldiers experienced reintegration after the attention, and attendant funding, of the peace accords waned.
Chapter 5: A longitudinal look at the question of reintegration

The exclusion of child soldiers in formal reintegration programs is reflected by the lack of literature on child soldiers in El Salvador. 29 The only specific document on child soldiers is the 1995 report by the January 16 Foundation.

The UCA team conducting this case study’s follow-up survey observed that the “topic of child soldiers has not been given its due importance...[] No one has taken responsibility for examining the conditions in which these persons are now living and suffering in our ‘society of peace.’”

The survey team observed that they had considerable difficulty getting veterans associations, government offices, and NGO programs to identify former child soldiers for the survey. However, as they went into communities, members were welcoming and helpful. The former child soldiers were hesitant at first, but volunteered their stories and comments, seeming to be pleased that someone had finally taken an interest in them. As one former child soldier said: “We young people were not recognized in any way... This was the worst that could have happened to me and my comrades.”

Virtually everyone interviewed for this case study noted regretfully, with the benefit of hindsight, that attention to youth, children’s rights, and psychosocial supports in the peace process were neglected. The director of one national association said: “The problem is not just that children participated in the military; it is that we did not accept that we violated children’s rights and did nothing for [their] reintegration... This was an error of vision. The handicapped and children should have been the priority... Part of the blame should be on society [because] we did not lobby for children.”

This case study’s follow-up survey illustrates the supports that child soldiers have been able to draw on in their transition to civilian life. Although follow-up more than six years after demobilization was difficult and may leave some issues under-represented, it offers a unique perspective on child soldiers’ perceptions of reintegration. While they were bitter at being excluded from demobilization and reintegration programs, they also demonstrated a fairly positive view of their roles as civilians. Families were identified as an extremely important factor in their relatively successful reintegration.

29 The name of the child soldier in the box is hypothetical to protect confidentiality.
5.1 Exclusion has left a sense of bitterness

A number of indicators raise concern about the resentment felt by young adults who spent their developing years as combatants and now struggle to take civilian roles: 79.4 percent noted that they felt discriminated against because of their age, and 86.3 percent felt that there should have been assistance specifically targeted to minors. As some commented:

“Because we were minors they ought to have helped us. We little ones, how [are we to make our lives].”

“All of us have the same rights. It was not a good thing that we didn’t receive anything.”

Some community members said that villages were not prepared to receive and reintegrate former child soldiers. While the majority did not see this as a problem, 38 percent of the community members surveyed reported that the communities were not prepared. Some noted more precisely that the youth should have been supported with education, 15.4 percent, or jobs, 12.8 percent.

The follow-up survey provides indicators that former child soldiers felt marginalized because of their different expectations for the reintegration process and their feelings that promises were unfulfilled. For example, 68.6 percent said that they had different expectations of the benefits and projects than what was received. This was especially the case for former FMLN child soldiers who had strong motivations of “fighting for a better life.” Many felt betrayed by the FMLN leadership because the ideals and goals for which they were fighting were not obtained.

Many said that they felt abandoned because of the disappearance of strong organization. During the conflict, their sense of belonging to something as highly organized and goal-oriented as the FMLN provided an organizing structure in their lives. Political, religious, and community associations have been unable to substitute for this sense of belonging and direction.

Six former FMLN child soldiers reported said that they were not happy to be demobilized. None of the former FAES child soldiers reported that they were “very satisfied.” On the other hand, 49.5 percent of the former FMLN child soldiers, including 64.1 percent of girls, said that they were very satisfied to be demobilized.

Considering the proportion of former child soldiers who joined voluntarily and were motivated to participate in the conflict, the extent of bitterness is striking. When asked if there was anything positive about their participation, 16.4 percent mentioned comradeship or having met their spouse, and 13 percent said that they “learned something” or gained experience. However, most former child soldiers cited nothing, or said that “staying alive” was the only positive aspect of their experience.

When asked about the immediate period after demobilization, 26.6 percent of the FMLN and 16.7 percent of the FAES survey respondents answered that “nothing” helped them in their reintegration. In addition, 85 percent of disabled former child soldiers reported that they did not receive prosthesis or other assistance.
through the reintegration program.

Table 8: Most useful factors to reintegration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Useful to Reintegration Upon Demobilization</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>FAES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Family</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Peace</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinsertion Training</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land received</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money received</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to work to earn living</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience gained</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No Answer</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 The importance of the family

While most child soldiers felt bitter and marginalized after demobilization, the follow-up survey also identified factors that present a more positive perception of longer-term reintegration. For example, 84 percent said that their family was very helpful in their reintegration, and 9.6 percent reported that friends were very important in their transition to civilian life.

Table 9: Sources of support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person or thing most important to social reintegration</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Community Neighbors</th>
<th>A project</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The significance of the family for reintegration reflects the fact that most former child soldiers still have immediate family members, have established strong new families, and did not have difficulties finding their families upon demobilization. This result was unexpected, since 41.6 percent of former child soldiers lost one or both parents during the civil war. Before the civil war, 89.1 percent lived with one or both parents and their siblings, but only 41.6 percent lived with these family members at the time of the survey.
The need to re-create family and social systems after conflict took many forms. In addition to direct family losses, 56 percent of the former child soldiers reported that their family situation changed after the war because of new ties. Almost half of the former child soldiers, 47.9 percent, were married or with a partner and 58.7 percent had their own children. This has significant implications for program responses, since child soldiers who have formed their own nuclear families require different kinds of support than the usual approach of family reunification. Restoring prior family ties is vital to social reintegration, but mobilizing the means to support their new families was also a paramount concern for former child soldiers. Gender difference is also important; 66 percent of female respondents were married or had a partner, but 61.2 percent of the male respondents were still single.

Concern must be raised for the twenty-four percent of former child soldiers who reported they did not have any family or had difficulty finding their family upon demobilization. The absence of family tracing during the demobilization and reintegration process left these youth with almost no supports. Although the ICRC conducted some family tracing, the demobilization and reintegration process made no effort to facilitate family tracing or refer cases to the ICRC. Of those who had difficulty finding their families, the reasons cited were that they did not know where they were due to displacement and separation, that they had “disappeared,” or that they were in other countries as refugees.

On the positive side, only 6.6 percent reported having difficulty being accepted by their community. Reasons given included differences between former FMLN and FAES combatants, and that the community “thought ill of them” because they were ex-combatants. Interviews with neighbors and community members revealed that a few youth had “a lot” of problems with other members of the community. Those who did were male, single, over 13 at the time of demobilization, and were all released from service rather than formally demobilized. The overall positive experience of community reintegration is a testament to Salvadorans’ strong family and community value system.

5.3 New civilian roles and looking to the future

In contrast to the widespread resentment and bitterness about the demobilization process, 78.5 percent of child soldiers reported being fairly or very satisfied in their civilian roles as fathers, mothers, workers, and community members. These roles were seen as important to reintegration even if they still regret aspects of their experience as child soldiers.

Satisfaction with their roles in civilian life is also reflected in data showing an expression of future orientation. Despite chronic poverty, as illustrated in Table 10, 89 percent of former child soldiers surveyed were optimistic about the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hope or Expectation for the future</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better life</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish studying</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Learned:
Need for both social and economic reintegration

While family reunification was clearly the most important social reintegration support, economic reintegration requires more specific projects. The experience of El Salvador shows that targeted attention to economic reintegration and community development projects are essential for child soldiers. Former child soldiers often have new families to support and constitute a significant population in need of productive employment in a post-conflict transition.

The vast majority of former child soldiers were studying, working, or engaged in some activity when they were surveyed. While 5.8 percent reported “nothing” or did not answer the question about current occupation, a significant number said that they were farmers (38.2 percent), do housework (22.9 percent, and 68 percent of female respondents), or have a specialized craft or occupation (10.6 percent).

Table 11: Current activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>FMLN</th>
<th>FAES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Laborer</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Trade</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trader</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing/No Answer</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 It should be noted that almost all of the former FAES child soldiers were accessed for the survey through disabled veterans associations; 86.7% of the former FAES child soldiers interviewed are disabled. This would contribute to the portion that reports ‘nothing’ as their current occupation.
The significance of the majority working in farming or in the home is reflected by the fact that 50.5 percent do not have their own income. This is more true for former FMLN youth as they are in poorer, more rural areas: 52.2 percent reported that they did not have their own income, in contrast to 20 percent of former FAES child soldiers. In general, former child soldiers have very low income levels; in many cases, not enough to cover primary needs. As can be seen in Table 12, more than 85 percent have incomes less than the minimum monthly wage of 2,000 colones.

Lesson Learned:
Need for alternative education modalities:
The experience of El Salvador shows that reintegration programs need to more creatively support both formal and non-formal educational opportunities for youth. Such programs require flexible hours in order to accommodate income generation needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income</th>
<th>C 500 or less</th>
<th>C 501 to 1,000</th>
<th>C 1,001 to 2,000</th>
<th>C 2,001 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The engagement of former child soldiers with some kind of work or activity contributes to the generally positive indicators of reintegration. While they are frustrated by poverty and a sense of marginalization, they do not want to return to being soldiers and maintain some hopes for the future.

Many said that they would like to study but could not because of work or a lack of financial resources. A few commented:

“I think housing and education are what I need, but, for education, I would like to have a night job so that I could study in the day.”

“Sometimes I feel sad because I don’t know how I am going to continue studying. I want to be somebody in life.”

“Now they give classes, but I won’t go with those little boys.”

Their main frustration, beyond expecting life to improve after the war, is the endemic poverty and lack of economic opportunity. Their assessment of their personal and community problems are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Difficulties facing former child soldiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main difficulty now:</th>
<th>FMLN</th>
<th>FAES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No problems</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs/employment</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic problems</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public services</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potable Drinking Water</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized Community</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of credits</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unkempt promises</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No answer</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Association with current social violence

Social violence in El Salvador has remained extremely high after the war; the murder rate is higher now than mortality during the war. Many of those interviewed for this study associate the current violence with the lack of attention to and the absence of psychosocial support for youth in the peace process. The culture of violence is attributed to an increase in drug use, lack of self-esteem and hope, rural alcoholism, and intra-familial violence. Discussions for this case study raised the question of whether former child soldiers find they have no choice but to continue using violence as a way of life.

The increase in organized crime and gangs has been widely decried in postwar El Salvador. While gangs existed before the civil war, their characteristics have changed and their membership has increased to an estimated 17,000 to 20,000 participants. Youth deported to El Salvador after arrest in the United States are part of the problem. Several gangs even kept their US names and identities, but they also include disaffected former combatants and other Salvadoran youth.

A group of former gang members, Homes Unidos, recently conducted a survey on gangs. The survey, published by UCA, reported that 10.2 percent of gang members were former combatants (3.7 percent from FAES and 6.5 percent from FMLN), but added that “many” gang members learned how to make weapons during the war. The low numbers of gang members who were former combatants may be a function of their young age; the majority were less than 14 years old at the time of the 1992 demobilization. They may not have been recruited to fight, but they witnessed the violence of the civil war as part of their childhood. The study makes little reference to the role of former combatants, but attributes other aspects of the phenomena of gangs and youth violence to the civil war.

The study notes the influence of “learning” violence during the war. The conflict caused many families to flee to the United States, where youth were pushed into urban gang violence and then were repatriated to a country where they had no social support. The life of a gang member brings together many elements of the culture of violence in El Salvador: the civil war, the historical culture of violent repression, machismo, and family violence. Through the civil war, youth “learned that violence was a viable alternative.” The survey

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31 The study, implemented by Homes Unidos, was supervised by UCA with support from Save the Children Sweden and US. The study surveyed 1,025 gang members between October 1996 and January 1997. The final report is entitled “Solidaridad y violencia en las pandillas del gran San Salvador: Más allá de la vida loca.”
found that gang members reported gaining self-respect (84.3 percent), power (77.5 percent), and personal confidence (62.5 percent) through their participation.

The UCA/UNICEF survey for this case study also reflects the pattern of social violence and gang membership. Even though respondents were perhaps more disproportionately successfully reintegrated into civilian roles, 13 percent admitted knowing former child soldiers who participated in delinquent activities and gangs. They also provided comments on how their experience as combatants influenced others:

“There are several boys who are involved in criminal activity because they have some kind of firearm.”

“The majority of delinquents were relieved from duty because they are mordidos.”

“A lot of times being out of work makes young people do something which is not usually what they would do…”

5.6. Comparison to adult reintegration

Most evaluations of the transition to peace and the reintegration of ex-combatants in El Salvador point to the shortfalls and poor results of the reintegration program. Interviews for this case study revealed that the lack of reintegration has been an “ongoing wound in society.” Some commentators asserted that less than 20 percent of former combatants could be considered successfully reintegrated.

Follow-up surveys have found that only 25 percent of ex-combatants work in the area for which they were trained. A 1996 UNDP evaluation of the urban Industry and Services Program determined that, of 3,544 beneficiaries, 82 percent received credits following the training but only 60 percent established businesses with their credits, and 52 percent of these businesses had closed by the time of the evaluation. These results are attributed to the lack of job opportunities and the low level of skill absorption. Course participants were assigned to training by their military leaders, and not chosen according to their interests and skills. This was largely due to the FMLN’s refusal to let SRN counselors, as government employees, interview individual combatants. Attendance in the training courses was poor. Some participants stayed in courses simply to receive the monthly living allowance.

Focus groups also indicated that the academic level of the courses was too high and that participants felt

32 It should be noted that the survey was only possible because of the access of Homes Unidos to gang members.
33 The term “mordido” (“bitten”) in this sense means that the person is resentful and waiting to take revenge.
34 Interview with UNDP official in September 1998.
36 This figure of beneficiaries does not match that of the SRN. Some of the training programs for former FAES combatants were implemented directly by the government, rather than UNDP. Further, there have been a number of disputes and queries on the SRN’s statistics.
discouraged. While these surveys focused on adult ex-combatants, this represents a particular barrier to child soldiers whose basic education had been interrupted at early ages.

FMLN troops did not receive an indemnity, but their leaders signed them up for the first available course to demonstrate that their needs were being met. Many ex-combatants were directed to the agricultural option so that they would have access to the land credit and a place to settle, even though their skills and income-generating potential may have been better served by the micro-enterprise options. A more recent vocational training activity supported by the European Union was based on an extensive survey of skill needs identified by businesses in El Salvador, and was expected to be more successful.

Former combatants also considered the options in the reintegration program to be too complicated. Many preferred to wait to be accepted for the National Civilian Police training academy, which guaranteed a minimum salary and economic stability. As part of the police reform component of the peace accords, 20 percent of new recruits were to be FMLN ex-combatants. Even though the requirement of at least a 9th grade education meant that this option would exclude most youth, many hoped to be included.

From August to December 1995, CREA conducted a detailed survey of all demobilized groups and a control group of civilians. It examined economic reintegration and social reintegration, using indicators such as participation in community organizations, political participation as represented by voting in elections, and individuals’ sense of self and their economic aspirations.

Respondents reported high degrees of social reintegration: 78 percent said that their community, family and personal situations had improved since the war; 69 percent reported involvement in community affairs; and 71 percent reported that their closest friends are non-combatants (used as an indicator of group identity). These positive indicators match the relatively high satisfaction reported by former child soldiers in their new civilian roles.

The CREA survey found that 80 percent of former soldiers considered themselves reintegrated -- 90 percent of the police demobilized group, 78 percent of former FAES soldiers, and 70 percent of ex-FMLN combatants. They valued credit lines and training as principal contributors to their reintegration. While other follow-up surveys rate the benefits programs as less useful, the fact that many former combatants of all ages found such supports to be helpful is a reminder that these were not available to former child soldiers.

Combining the survey data with focus group results, CREA emphasized the following points:

- Reintegration was not clearly defined. Policy makers linked reintegration with a combatant moving back to his area of origin, but ex-combatants linked reintegration with social mobility and economic opportunity;
- The rigidity of the reintegration schemes may have eased management issues for the SRN but it hindered actual reintegration and did not reflect the community-based context of civilian life;
- Training and credit schemes needed to be linked to actual opportunities; this could have been improved by job-creation and tax schemes.

5.7 Link to economic policy

Many of those interviewed for this study commented that the reintegration program provided politically expedient privileges without interfering in the economic policy of adjustment. Because youth had little political visibility, their needs were absent from the reintegration program.

Peace has brought a resurgence of confidence and investment in the Salvadoran economy. 38 Growth policies have included the elimination of export taxes and the reduction of the top income tax rate, but policies have failed to address equity and the country’s economic recovery is precarious. El Salvador still has one of the largest shares of government spending on the military and one of the lowest shares of spending on social welfare in the Western Hemisphere.

Central elements of El Salvador’s economic policy have been counter-productive to the needs of reintegrating former child soldiers. The strategy for the agricultural sector, for example, was designed to promote the export of specialized crops. This requires advanced technical skills, marketing, and appropriate soil conditions. The ex-combatants, particularly former child soldiers, were provided marginally productive land and did not have the skills, capacity, time, or resources to engage in ongoing training or participate in credit schemes. The macroeconomic environment and El Salvador’s overvalued currency have not favored exports.

The promotion of ‘maquidores’, or special export processing zones, was another central element of El Salvador’s economic policy. However, such industries -- primarily textiles -- were not encouraged in the predominantly rural or semi-urban areas where former combatants were re-settled. Instead, they have favored the employment of young women over the majority of young male ex-combatants who needed jobs in labor-intensive industries.

This highlights the role that all actors -- from government leaders to international donors to community groups – play in the reintegration of former child soldiers. In a setting where social inequity was such an important structural cause of the civil war, issues of distribution and equity require as much attention as economic growth. Specialized programs for child soldiers cannot be set aside from the broader economic policy framework. Economists increasingly emphasize that basic education is an important foundation for equitable growth. With the exception of Haiti, El Salvador still has the lowest primary school enrollment rates in the Western Hemisphere. Here too, El Salvador’s former child soldiers would have benefited from policies favoring alternative means of gaining education.

38 GDP growth increased from 3.4% in 1990 to 5.5% in 1994. Primary resources on El Salvador’s post-conflict economy as it relates to the reintegration of ex-combatants were “Macroeconomic Policy and Peace Building in El Salvador”, 1997, by James K. Boyce and Manuel Pastor, Jr. and “Adjustment Toward Peace”, May 1995, UNDP.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

More than six years after demobilization, child soldiers in El Salvador still feel bitter about being excluded from the reintegration programs and having their role in the conflict go unacknowledged. The story of child soldiers in El Salvador can be seen as a series of missed opportunities. Despite civil society advocacy, human rights monitoring, early demobilization planning recommendations, the peace process, later negotiations, and NGO investment in community development programs, there was little action on behalf of underage combatants.

The experience of child soldiers in El Salvador illustrates the critical importance of political will in specifically including them in the peace process and subsequent reintegration programming. Such political commitment is dependant on those responsible for recruitment policies and practices and for negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

While this case study does not document a specific program for child soldiers, it provides important lessons on prevention, the need for inclusion in demobilization and, with a unique longitudinal view, their reintegration. Lessons from El Salvador emphasize the important balance of both social and economic reintegration. Family reunification and community life are shown to be essential to social reintegration. Towards economic reintegration, child soldiers’ priority needs are income generation and a flexible means of gaining education in order to achieve longer-term self-sufficiency. Despite chronic poverty and concern with social violence, most former child soldiers in El Salvador are positive about assuming productive roles in civil society. That positive commitment must be encouraged through improved access to, and benefit from, economic development policies and programs.
### Annex 1 - Acronyms and principal organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACISAM</td>
<td>Association for Training and Research in Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALFAES</td>
<td>Association of the Wounded of the Armed Forces of El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASALDIG</td>
<td>Disabled and Handicapped War Veterans Association of El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREA</td>
<td>Creative Associates International, a US consultant firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-16</td>
<td>January 16 Foundation, Fundacion 16 de Enero, a FMLN NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAES</td>
<td>Forces Armada de El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>Frente Farabundo Martí Liberación Nacional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes Unidos</td>
<td>NGO in San Salvador of former gang members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRP</td>
<td>National Reconstruction Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUSAL</td>
<td>United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAHO/WHO</td>
<td>Pan-American Health Organization and World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTT</td>
<td>Program for Transference of Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rädda Barnen</td>
<td>Swedish Save the Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRN</td>
<td>Secretariat for National Reconstruction (Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutela Legal</td>
<td>Legal Protection Office of the Archbishop of San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCA</td>
<td>José Simeón Cañas Universidad Centroamericana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2 - Selected bibliography

Published Sources:


Cruz, José Miguel and Nelson Portillo Peña, with the collaboration of Homes Unidos, Solidaridad y violencia en las pandillas del gran San Salvador: Más allá de la vida loca, UCA Editores, San Salvador, El Salvador, 1998, supported by Rädda Barnen and Save the Children (US).

Fundacion 16 de Enero, Los Ninos y Jóvenes Ex-Combatientes en su Proceso de Reinscripción a la Vida Civil, 1995, supported by UCA and Rädda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden).


Unpublished Sources:


ENCUESTA SOBRE NIÑOS SOLDADOS

Objetivo: Conocer el impacto que la experiencia militar y el proceso de reinserción tuvo en los jóvenes excombatientes, tanto positiva como negativamente, así como también, indagar sobre los beneficios que recibieron de los programas surgidos de los Acuerdos de paz y el desarrollo de éstos en su vida adulta como civiles, para poder desarrollar futuras intervenciones o proyectos en El Salvador y en otros países, con experiencias similares a las de El Salvador.

I. DATOS PERSONALES

1- Sexo: (1) Masculino (2) Femenino
2- En qué año nació: ____________
3- Estado civil: (1) Soltero (2) Casado/Acompañado (3) Separado/divorciado (4) Viudo
4- Grupo: (1) FMLN (2) FAES (3) Defensa Civil (4) Patrullero Cantonal
5- ¿Cuál era su rango militar? _________________________
6- ¿En qué año fue desmovilizado? _______________ (00) No fue desmovilizado
7- ¿Tiene hijos actualmente? (1) Sí (2) No [pase a 9]
8- No. de hijos: ______________
9- ¿Sus padres están vivos? (0) Ninguno (1) Ambos (2) Sólo madre (3) Sólo padre
10- ¿Ha cambiado su grupo familiar después del conflicto? (1) Sí (2) No [pase a 13]
11- ¿Con quién vivía antes del conflicto?
(0) Con nadie (1) Madre (2) Padre (3) Padres
(4) Padre, esposa (o) e hijos (5) Esposa (o), hijos y otros
(6) Abuelos y/o tíos (8) Con amigos (7) Otros: ____________________
12- ¿Tiene contacto con los familiares con los que vivía antes? (1) Sí (2) No
13- ¿Con quién vive actualmente? (0) Con nadie (1) Madre (2) Padre (3) Padres
(4) Padres, esposa(o) e hijos (5) Esposa(o), hijos y otros (6) Abuelos y/o tíos
(8) Con amigos (7) Otros: ____________________
14- ¿Cuántas personas viven actualmente con usted? ____________________

II. EXPERIENCIA MILITAR

15- ¿Fue reclutado o se incorporó voluntariamente? (1) Fue reclutado [pase a 17] (2) Voluntario [siga]
16- ¿Cuáles fueron sus motivaciones para incorporarse?
(1) Perdió a sus padres  (2) Luchar por una vida mejor  (3) Por trabajar  (4) Le gustaba  
(5) Defender a la patria  (6) Por una sociedad justa  (7) Otra:  

17- ¿En qué año ingresó al FMLN o FAES? ____________  
18- ¿Cuántos años tenía usted cuando ingresó? ____________ años  
19- ¿Cuáles eran sus funciones?  (1) Correo  (2) Combatiente  (3) Logístico  
(4) Comunicaciones (radista)  (5) Político  (6) Sanitario  
(7) Otro: ________________________  

20- ¿Hasta qué grado estudió antes de incorporarse? ____________  (00) No estudió ningún grado [pase a 22]  
21- ¿Cuál fue la razón para dejar los estudios?  (1) Ya no quiso seguir  (2) Por incorporarse  
(3) No tenían dinero  (4) Por trabajar  (7) Otra: ________________________  

22- ¿A qué se dedicaba antes de integrarse?___________________________________________________  

23- Podría decirme, ¿qué fue lo peor que le ocurrió durante la guerra?  

____________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________  

24- Podría decirme, ¿qué fue lo mejor que le sucedió durante la guerra?  

____________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________  

25- Durante la guerra, ¿utilizó algún tipo de droga?  (1) Sí [siga]  (2) No [pase a 26]  
25.1- ¿Qué tipo de droga?  (1) Marihuana  (2) Cocaína (crack, nevado, etc.)  
(3) Pega  (4) Primos (marihuana con cocaína)  (5) Sprays  (6) Gas  (7) Otro:__________  

25.2- Podría decirme, ¿cuáles fueron las razones por las que utilizó droga?__________________________  

____________________________________________________________________________________  

26- ¿Mantuvo frecuentemente relaciones sexuales con diferentes personas mientras participó en la guerra?  
(3) Frecuentemente  (2) Algunas veces  (1) Rara vez  (0) Nunca  

[Sólo para mujeres del FMLN]  
27- ¿Mientras participó en la guerra tuvo algún embarazo?  (1) Sí  (2) No [Pase a 29]  
28- ¿Perdió al niño(a)?  (1) Sí  (2) No  

III. DISCAPACITADOS Y LISIADOS  
29- ¿Por causa de la guerra sufre alguna discapacidad física, visual o auditiva?  
(1) Física  (2) Visual  (3) Auditiva  (0) Ninguna [Pase a 31]  
30- ¿En los programas de reinserción surgidos de los Acuerdos de paz, le facilitaron alguna prótesis o algún tipo de ayuda que le permitiera superar dicha discapacidad?  
(1) Sí  (2) No  

31- ¿Durante la reinserción o después de la guerra, recibió terapia física y/o psicológica?
IV. EXPERIENCIAS DE DESMOVILIZACIÓN Y BENEFICIOS DE REINTEGRACIÓN Y PROYECTOS

32- ¿Qué tan satisfecho estaba de ser desmovilizado o de haber sido dado de baja?
(3) Mucho (2) Algo (1) Poco (0) Nada

33- ¿Cómo se enteró acerca del proceso de paz y los Acuerdos?
_______________________________________________________________________________________

34- ¿Recibió documentación de desmovilizado o excombatiente (carnet)?  (1) Sí (2) No

A) Experiencia de desmovilización

[Sólo para desmovilizados del FMLN] (Concentraciones militares)

35- ¿Fue usted desmovilizado y puesto en concentraciones militares o simplemente puesto en libertad?
(1) En concentración (2) Puesto en libertad [pase a 45]

36- ¿Cuánto tiempo estuvo en la concentración?___________ meses

37- ¿Cuál era la actividad más importante que realizaba cuando estuvo en la concentración?
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Beneficios recibidos durante las concentraciones:
Como resultado de los Acuerdos de paz, en el período de concentración recibió usted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Sí</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38- Equipo personal, ropa, comida, muebles y otros utensilios</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39- Vivienda o alojamiento</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40- Atención médica</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41- Alfabetización o nivelación académica</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42- Consejería acerca de los programas de reinserción</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43- Cursos de orientación sobre habilidades para la vida en la sociedad civil (salud mental, reproductiva y nutrición)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44- Dinero (donaciones o créditos)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
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45- ¿Qué otros beneficios recibió durante este período?
_______________________________________________________________________________________

[Sólo para excombatientes de la FA] (Acuartelamiento)

Como resultado de los Acuerdos de paz, en el período de acuartelamiento recibió usted:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47- Alfabetización o nivelación académica</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48- Consejería acerca de los programas de reinserción</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49- Cursos de orientación sobre habilidades para la vida en la sociedad civil (salud mental, reproductiva y nutrición)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
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mental, reproductiva y nutrición)

50- ¿Qué otros beneficios recibió durante este período?

51- ¿Qué fue lo más útil para usted en este período de desmovilización o disolución de fuerzas que le ayudó a reintegrarse a la vida civil?

B) Experiencias de Reinserción

52- ¿Cómo tuvo conocimiento sobre los beneficios y opciones de los proyectos de reinserción?

53- ¿Tuvo información disponible o fue orientado por alguna persona para hacer su elección?

(1) Sí  (2) No [Pase a 55]

54- ¿Por quién fue orientado?

Como resultado de los Acuerdos de paz, en el período de reinserción recibió usted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>El beneficio</th>
<th>Sí</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55- Set personal (comida, muebles, implementos de cocina, ropa)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56- Tierra o créditos para tierras</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57- Implementos de agricultura, semillas (aperos agrícolas)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58- Pensión</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59- Materiales de construcción para vivienda</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60- Beca para formación vocacional (carpintería, mecánica, panadería, etc.)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61- Beca para educación formal (bachillerato, téc. vocacional, universidad)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62- Crédito para comenzar algún negocio</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63- Atención médica</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64- Crédito para vivienda</td>
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</table>

65- [En caso de tierra o negocio] ¿Recibió asistencia técnica?  (1) Sí  (2) No

66- Ya en el proceso de reinserción civil ¿usted volvió a estudiar o inició sus estudios?  (1) Sí  (2) No

67- [Si retornó a la educación formal]: ¿Era la clase mixta, es decir, habían excombatientes que no tenían ninguna formación?  (1) Sí  (2) No

Si tuvo formación vocacional: [en caso contrario pase a 70]

68- ¿Fueron los programas de formación exclusivamente para excombatientes?  (1) Sí  (2) No
69- ¿Fue de mucha, algo, poca o ninguna utilidad el curso?
   (3) Mucha   (2) Algo   (1) Poca   (0) Ninguna

70- ¿Inició algún tipo de negocio?  (1) Sí   (2) No [pase a 72]
71- ¿Tuvo apoyo o crédito disponible para comenzar el negocio?  (1) Sí   (2) No

72- ¿Tenía usted diferentes expectativas de los beneficios de los proyectos (esperanzas o promesas) comparado con lo recibido?  (1) Sí   (2) No
73- ¿Tuvieron actividades que les permitieron adquirir habilidades que les ayudaran a reincorporarse a la vida civil; como por ejemplo: actividades culturales, deportes, charlas sobre salud, salud reproductiva, etc.?  (1) Sí   (2) No [Pase a 76]
74- ¿Fueron útiles para usted dichas actividades?  (1) Sí   (2) No
75- ¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

76- ¿Se sintió marginado, por su edad, de algunos programas o beneficios que otros ex-combatientes mayores de edad recibieron?  (1) Sí   (2) No
77- ¿Considera que por haber sido menor de edad al momento de los Acuerdos de paz, debió haber recibido asistencia distinta a la recibida por combatientes mayores que usted?  (1) Sí   (2) No
78- ¿Tuvo dificultad para encontrar a su familia después de la guerra?  (1) Sí   (2) No [pase a 80]  (0) No tiene familia [pase a 81]
79- ¿Qué experiencias dificultosas tuvo?

80- ¿Qué tan bien se lleva con su familia?
   (4) Muy bien   (3) Bien   (2) Mal   (1) Muy mal
81- ¿Tuvo dificultad para decidir dónde vivir y con quién estar?  (1) Sí   (2) No [pase a 85]
82- ¿Tuvo dificultades para ser aceptado en su comunidad?  (1) Sí   (2) No
83- ¿Qué dificultades tuvo?

84- ¿Qué considera que se debió haber hecho para ayudar a sobrellevar esas dificultades?

85- ¿Qué fue lo más útil para usted en la transición a la vida civil?
   **85.1- Económicamente:**  (1) Tierra   (2) Créditos   (3) Negocios   (4) Ayuda para vivienda
   (7) Otro:
   **85.2- Socialmente (incluyendo educación y salud):**  (1) Capacitación   (2) Formación educativa
   (3) Capacitación sobre salud   (4) Atención en salud   (7) Otro:
   **85.3- Psicosocialmente:**  (1) Apoyo de la comunidad   (2) Actividades para reinserción
   (3) Atención en salud mental   (4) La familia   (5) Amigos   (7) Otro:
V. INDICADORES DE REINSERCIÓN SOCIAL ACTUALES

86- ¿Estudia actualmente? (1) Sí (2) No [pase a 88]

87- ¿Recibe educación formal (escuela) o formación vocacional (talleres, capacitación)? (1) Formal (escuela) (2) Vocacional (talleres, capacitaciones) [En cualquier caso pase a 89]

88- ¿Por qué no estudia? (1) No quiere (2) Trabaja (3) No tiene dinero o apoyo (4) No hay escuela cerca (7) Otra: _________________________

89- ¿Cuál es su ocupación actual? ___________________________

90- ¿Usted tiene ingresos propios? (1) Sí (2) No [pase a 92]

91- ¿Podría decirme a cuánto ascienden sus ingresos mensuales aproximadamente? ______________ colones

92- Si usted no tiene ingresos propios, ¿cómo se mantiene? _______________________________________________________________________________________

93- ¿Dónde vive actualmente tiene acceso a servicios de salud y agua potable? (1) Servicio de agua potable (2) Servicios de salud (3) Ambos (0) Ninguno

[Sí tiene o vive con niños]

Sus hijos o los niños que viven con usted tienen acceso a:

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94- Una adecuada nutrición</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95- Servicios de salud</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96- Educación</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97- Asistencia de la iglesia</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>98- Ayuda de miembros de la comunidad o de alguna ONG.</td>
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99- ¿Cómo se siente con sus nuevos roles civiles, es decir, siendo ahora padre/madre, esposo/a, vecino, patrono, etc.? (4) Muy Satisfecho (3) Algo satisfecho (2) Poco satisfecho (1) Nada satisfecho

100- ¿Qué persona o qué cosa ha sido la más útil para usted en su transición a la vida civil? (familia, amigos, vecino, proyectos realizados por ONG’s). (1) Familia (2) Amigos (3) Vecinos (4) Algún proyecto (7) Otro: _________

101- ¿Qué espera para el futuro? _______________________________________________________________________________________

102- ¿Tiene amigos o conoce a otros jóvenes de su comunidad que están involucrados en actos delincuenciales o crimen? (1) Sí (2) No

VI. IMPACTO PSICOSOCIAL DURANTE LA GUERRA Y EN LOS AÑOS SIGUIENTES A LOS ACUERDOS DE PAZ

103- ¿Con qué frecuencia se enferma usted?
104- ¿Padece de insomnio?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

105- ¿Con qué frecuencia tiene pesadillas?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

106- ¿Se siente muchas veces nervioso?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

107- ¿Con qué frecuencia se siente angustiado?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

108- ¿Se siente muchas veces cansado y deprimido?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

109- ¿Recuerda o piensa mucho en las cosas que le pasaron durante el período del conflicto?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

110- ¿Se enoja con facilidad?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca

111- ¿Se siente decepcionado de algo o de alguien?     (1) Sí   (2) No

VII. SONDEO DE NECESIDADES ACTUALES

112- Podría decírmelo, ¿cuál es la principal dificultad o problema que usted o su comunidad enfrentan actualmente?

________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

113- ¿De qué manera cree usted que se podría resolver dicha dificultad?

114- Podría decírmelo, ¿qué tipo de proyecto podría ser más útil para usted en la actualidad?
(1) Agrícolas  (2) Vivienda  (3) Educación  (4) Servicios básicos  (5) Salud  (7) Otros: ____________________________

115- Actualmente, ¿es usted beneficiario de algún proyecto o programa?  (1) Sí  (2) No [Pase a 117]

116- ¿En qué consiste dicho proyecto o programa?__________________________________________

VIII. PREGUNTAS PARA FAMILIA, VECINOS U OTROS INFORMANTES (como promotores o líderes de la comunidad)

117- ¿Con qué frecuencia se ve el(la) joven triste?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca
(9) Ns/Nr

118- ¿El(la) joven se lleva bien con las personas de su comunidad?
(4) Siempre  (3) Casi siempre  (2) A veces  (1) Casi nunca  (0) Nunca
(9) Ns/Nr

119- ¿Al(a) joven le gusta trabajar?
(3) Mucho (2) Algo (1) Poco (0) Nada
(9) Ns/Nr

120- ¿Con qué frecuencia el(la) joven ha tenido problemas (conflictos) con otras personas de la comunidad?
(4) Siempre (3) Casi siempre (2) A veces (1) Casi nunca (0) Nunca
(9) Ns/Nr

121- ¿Con qué frecuencia el(la) joven se ve deprimido o que se enoja con facilidad?
(4) Siempre (3) Casi siempre (2) A veces (1) Casi nunca (0) Nunca
(9) Ns/Nr

122- ¿Cuál fue la actitud de los vecinos hacia el joven al momento de la desmovilización y el retorno a la comunidad?
(1) Apoyo (2) Comprensión (3) Indiferencia (4) Rechazo
(5) Desconfianza (9) Ns/Nr

123- Y ahora, ¿la actitud sigue siendo la misma o ha cambiado?
(1) Sigue siendo la misma (2) ha cambiado positivamente
(3) Ha cambiado negativamente (9) Ns/Nr

124- ¿Cree usted que las comunidades estaban preparadas para recibir y reintegrar a la juventud militar?
(1) Si estaban preparadas (2) No estaban preparadas

125- En su opinión, ¿qué habría sido lo más útil para las comunidades y los padres en el proceso de reintegración de la juventud militar a la vida civil?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

OBSERVACIONES:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________________