



# **Frameworks for Assessing Resilience**

**Guatemala**

**Summary Document of the Consultation Phase**



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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

##### *Introduction*

As part of its involvement with international efforts in peacebuilding, Interpeace's Latin America Office has joined together with Comprendre la resiliencia como un sistema complejo que supone múltiples capacidades de respuesta, condicionadas por la interacción de various groups and forums of aid agencies from all over the world that, over the last years, has explored the contribution that the concept of resilience can make in these efforts.

In the case of Guatemala, the objective has been to provide national actors involved in the process of Participatory Action Research (PAR) with a conceptual and action framework that, based on a participatory description of the ways in which resilience is expressed in our society, enables them to identify the existing capacities in society for the transformation of conflicts in non violent ways and, thus, encourage them.

The PAR methodology involves a number of complementary phases: the exploratory phase, the consultation phase, the implementation phase (involving a national group and thematic working groups) and the evaluation and follow-up phase.

The paper entitled "Resilience and Peace Building: Framework for Analysis for Resilience in Guatemala" brings together the findings of the first two phases of the process (exploration and consultation), from which the following information was extracted. This executive summary aims to provide inputs for a debate that will define a thematic agenda for the working groups.

From the perspective of Interpeace, this document suggests that the following must be taken into account in order to understand the contributions that the concept of resilience has made to peace building:

- Resilience must be understood as a complex system made up of multiple response capacities that are conditioned by the interaction between actors and structures in a given context.
- These response capacities can be channelled via absorption, adaptation, and/or transformation (or a

combination thereof).

- These responses can originate and have an impact on one or various levels of the social structure (individual, family, community, region, nation).
- The responses can be negative or positive with regards to the conflict dynamics in a given context (local and national).
- The temporal dimension of the responses – their duration – helps in identifying their efficacy for transformation, a basic prerequisite for peacebuilding.
- The context helps to identify those structural aspects in which capacities for resilience are developed. In other words, resilience to what?

The change in focus involved in a resilience perspective – which means not only taking into account deficits or problems but also capacities found among individuals, groups, families, communities and institutions and the different relations between them – offers new possibilities for addressing the challenges of peacebuilding.

For the purposes of peacebuilding, the concept of resilience refers to the capacity that exists in a society – in any and all of its social and institutional environments – to cope, overcome, and emerged strengthened from situations of violent conflict.

### *Methodological approaches*

A Framework for Assessing Resilience in Guatemala will be implemented along the following phases:

Exploratory phase

Consultation phase

Implementation phase of the PAR (nation project group and thematic working groups)

Evaluation and follow-up phase

### *Exploratory phase*

This first phase aimed at defining a methodological strategy to initiate a discussion about resilience within the context of the country. It also allowed for the identification of three thematic core issues that group those factors (problems) that require resilient responses and actions. These core issues are:

1. Socio-environmental core issues, that refer to conflicts associated with damage to the natural environment and the confrontation over natural resources.
2. Insecurity and violence-related core issues, that refer to violent criminal actions including assaults, kidnappings, extortions, homicides, violence against women, and domestic violence, as well as the proliferation of criminal organizations especially linked to trafficking in drugs, arms, and people.
3. Core issues involving the fragility of public institutions such as the incapacity, inactivity or inefficiency of

the State's institutions to carry out the legal mandate for which they were created.

These core issues served to pose the questions that were discussed during the consultation phase by the departmental discussion groups, the sectoral discussions groups, and in-depth interviews.

### *Consultation phase*

By bringing together a wide spectrum of social actors, this phase sought to delve further into those issues related to the principal problems faced by the country, the responses that society implements to confront them, the capacities among the people to implement those responses, the meaning that those actions have, and the priorities defined by the social groups.

This phase involved consultation groups from 11 departments of the country chosen on the basis of criteria of ethnic-cultural makeup, socio-economic situation, and existence and persistence of one or various problems identified during the exploratory phase; and 6 sectoral groups which provided contrast to the departmental perspective with a more national viewpoint expressed by organizations and groupings whose interests are not circumscribed to a specific geographical location and the problems they mentioned are of national character: women, indigenous populations, youth, private sector, political sector (political parties), and resistance organizations.

The consultation phase took place during the months of August-December 2014 and involved a total of 316 people.

Once the information was organized, the writing of this document was guided by an analytical-descriptive logic that aimed more at organizing the information received than in writing up an interpretative analysis.

The strategy of the analysis is organized at three levels:

- On the first level of analysis are listed the responses and actions taken by the population against diverse problems, as well as the frequency of recurrence of those responses (which are more frequent and which are not) and those aspects of the context that might be related to the frequency.
- At the second level of analysis the responses are classified according to how the interactions take place: horizontal (among groups), vertical (between groups and institutions), and individual.
- At the third level of analysis, actions are listed with regard to the capacities in communities, groups, and institutions.

### **Findings and results of the consultation process**

The following diagram summarizes in general terms the problems identified in each one of the core issues, as well as the responses (actions) carried out by those consulted in each case. Each of these actions is included in the section of the consultation phase.

<p>Socio-environmental conflicts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use and distribution of natural resources</li> <li>• Agrarian problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protests/demand for action by the State</li> <li>• Communal or neighbourhood organization and consultation</li> <li>• Information and awareness raising</li> <li>• Cultural initiatives</li> <li>• Peaceful resistance</li> <li>• Kitchen gardens for subsistence</li> <li>• Land occupations</li> <li>• Negotiation and dialogue</li> </ul>
<p>Violence and insecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminality and delinquency</li> <li>• Street drug sales</li> <li>• Violence against women and children</li> <li>• Tense social relations</li> <li>• Inept management of security strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silence and fear</li> <li>• Inertia and acceptance</li> <li>• Denounce in State institutions and other networks</li> <li>• Night rounds</li> <li>• Taking justice into one's own hand</li> <li>• Privatization of security services and activities</li> <li>• Use of alternative mechanisms of justice based on community organization</li> <li>• Influence to achieve transformations of institutions</li> <li>• Family self-protection measures</li> <li>• Security strategies implemented by the State</li> </ul>
<p>Fragility of public institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited capacity to comply with their mandate</li> <li>• Politicization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for alternative basic services</li> <li>• Search out NGOs as alternative responses to the State</li> <li>• Substitute for institutional shortcomings: "substitute for the State"</li> <li>• Business social responsibility</li> <li>• Social audits</li> <li>• Non-compliance with obligations or search for defence mechanisms before the State</li> <li>• Deny one's own identity to have access to the State</li> </ul>
<p>Socio-economic fragility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment, lack of opportunities</li> <li>• Consumption and high cost of electricity</li> <li>• Access to basic services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjustment and reduction of family budget</li> <li>• Informal economy</li> <li>• Migration</li> <li>• Underemployment</li> <li>• Alternative forms of access to basic services</li> <li>• Exposure to risk: involvement in illicit activities</li> <li>• Smuggling</li> </ul>

Problems and responses:

### *Levels of action*

When referring to levels of action, the following is meant:

- The vertical level: the linkages and exchanges of capacities among groups in a society and the State, its institutions and norms.
- The horizontal level: the relations among groups in a society and their presence in different context of social cohesion such as the family, religious groups, civic and political organizations, commercial groups, and other forms of organization based on conditions of gender or ethnicity, among others.

From a perspective of social cohesion, one relevant aspect is the creation of articulations in the vertical and horizontal levels or at the intersections that allow groups and communities to generate more capacities to address and manage conflicts jointly. Among these articulations are those based on the identity of the members of a group (bonding), the creation of transversal links among various groups (bridging), or groups connected by relationships mediated by the State's institutions and norms (linking).

### *Actions at the vertical level*

Various actions are evidence of exchanges among social groups and the State, its institutions and norms such as: influence and lobbying, inter-institutional and inter-sectoral networks, social audits, support and advice by different actors for State activities and implementation of programmes of prevention by the State based on the model of citizen security.

### *Actions at a horizontal level*

In opinion of many of the participants in the consultation phase, horizontal articulations – without the presence of the State – tend to be privileged in light of the distrust and disinterest in establishing collaborative mechanisms with public institutions.

At the horizontal levels of action, community and social organizations stand out as the principal form of articulation by groups and sectors in society, as was mentioned in the groups that were consulted. Organization is conceived as the best way to implement really consistent changes, while it is through organization that actors channel the diversity of responses to the problems they face, such as social protest, sharing and disseminating information, consulting and discussing matters of interest, activating alternative forms of justice and basic services not provided by the State and, in a last instance, alternative forms of economic activity.

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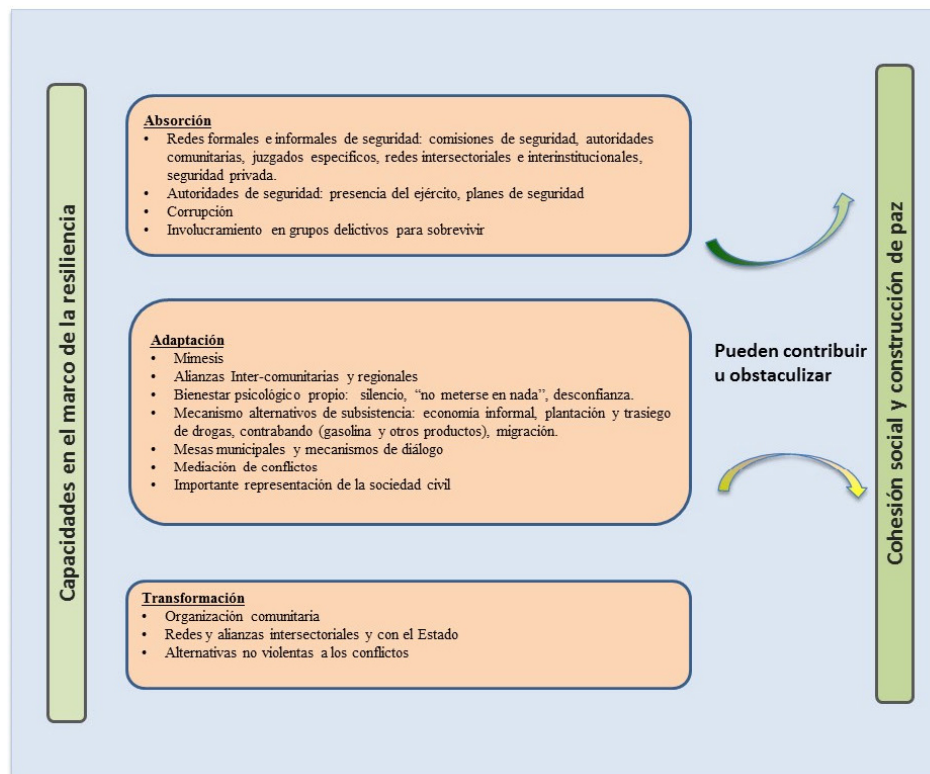
### *Individual actions*

During the consultation phase reference was made to actions carried out at the individual level which, to the mind of the participants, reflects a lack of articulation to resolve problems. These, then, are responses at the individual level that seek quick solutions to solutions and with no possibility of producing a wider impact. These responses, so far as could be observed, principally address issues of subsistence and security.

Capacities for resilience refer to the available resources, abilities, and knowledge to implement action. These capacities can be found at the level of families, communities, and institutions. According to the analytical framework for resilience, capacities can be classified as absorption, adaptation, and transformation.

Capacities of absorption denote the persistence of problems and continuity/stability of actions; adaptation, on the other hand, tends towards greater flexibility to change models for action and fine-tune adjustments to problem situations, until the capacity to transform is reached and the problem situation changes. The following diagram synthesizes these capacities and actions.

### *Capacities for managing conflictive situations and conflicts*





## *Capacities for managing conflictive situations and conflicts*

### Absorption

- Formal and informal security networks: security commissions, communal authorities, special courts, intersectoral and interinstitutional networks, private security.
- Security forces: presence of the army, security plans.
- Corruption.
- Involvement in criminal groups in order to survive.

### Adaptation

- Mimetic attitudes.
- Inter-communal and regional alliances.
- Personal psychological well-being: silence, not getting involved, mistrust.
- Alternative subsistence mechanisms: informal economy, planting and smuggling drugs, contraband (gasoline and other products), migration.
- Municipal roundtables and mechanisms for dialogue
- Conflict mediation
- Important representation from civil society

### Transformation

- Community organization
- Intersectoral networks and alliance and with the State
- Non-violent alternatives to conflicts

Many of these actions and capacities today are being questioned, both in terms of their efficacy and their legitimacy. For this reason, capacities and actions might contribute to greater social cohesion and peace building as well as to their detriment, depending on the position and means of action of those involved.

The groups that were consulted expressed the belief that there were not sufficient resources available to conceive of significant social changes in the current conditions; nonetheless, the importance of organization in communities, networks, and alliances was stressed as a means of generating good results for social transformations.

The discussions identified a lack of capacities and a number of obstacles that must be overcome to generate new conditions for resolution and management of conflicts, among which the following stand out:

- An absence of open and legitimate dialogue.
- A lack of political will.
- Radical ideological positions.
- Meddling by political interests.
- *A priori* criminalization of collective actions.
- A lack of transparency in the State's plans as well as a lack of resources assigned to them.

## Meanings

During the consultation phase, the question of “what it meant” to implement an action was addressed. In the first place, when the question was posed of what motivates an action, some working groups tended to consider the issue in affective and emotional terms, that is, how they were affected emotionally by the actions undertaken. In these cases, when mention was made of “what it means” to denounce or demand, two types of sentiments were evidenced in the face of failure to fulfill commitments made by government authorities: impotence and frustration. The second way of understanding actions was with regards to the expectations for the future, that is, the objective of the actions or the changes that were sought:

1. An improvement in the quality of life of current and future generations: “For my children, to leave them a better future” and “For the common good of all.”
2. The search for change in the social and political conditions of the country: “To have viable and sustainable proposals” and “To work for a future of peace.”
3. The creation of new forms of behaviour: “To overcome indifference” and “So that change can begin with us.”

The third form of coming to terms with meanings was to imagine them in terms of reasons and motives (personal and political) that inspired their actions. Among the principal reasons mentioned are the following:

- Indignation.
- Organization to overcome adversity.
- Continuity in the history of struggle.
- Faith.
- Resistance as a way of life.
- Defence of private property.

## Priorities

From the perspective of Interpeace, one of the objectives of PAR is to involve all actors and sectors interested in finding solutions to problems that have been identified. During the consultation phase, after lengthy discussions about problems and actions, the participants also reflected on issues that to their minds should remain as part of the debate of the following stages of the process.

Social-environmental conflicts:

- Communal consultations prior to the construction of mega-projects (mining, hydroelectric dams, and one-crop agriculture).
- Divergent economic model(s) of rural development.
- Lack of adequate legislation for exploitation of natural resources.
- Ideological polarization without real possibilities of dialogue.
- Support for self-improvement to generate income.
- Support for food self-sufficiency.
- Regulation of mining activities.

Violence and insecurity:

- Drug trafficking as an emerging and threatening actor for all social sectors.
- Lack of culturally pertinent strategies on security and justice.
- Gaps in legislation on citizen participation in security.
- Revisit the role of families and schools in the prevention of violence.
- Define the role of the citizenry in the strategies for security and justice.
- Discuss the relationship between Maya law and State law.
- Strengthening of the system of security and justice.

Fragility of State institutions:

- Use of the State for patronage.
- Tax reform and public spending.
- Financing of political parties and, thus, reforms of the system.
- Role of the Development Councils in support of their communities or as allies of political parties and the government.
- Existing legislation on civil service and development councils.
- Support for new forms of social linking.

- Mechanisms for transforming action schemes in groups and communities.
- Role of NGOs and international cooperation agencies.
- The role of the citizenry in the evaluation of public policies.
- Linkages between the citizenry and local governments.
- The necessary review and reform of the electoral and political parties laws.
- Design, allocation, and distribution of the national budget.
- Strengthening of civil service and review of the civil service law.

Socioeconomic fragility:

- Improvement in the quality of life and economic situation of families.
- Access to new technologies.

### **Components of a discussion on resilience in Guatemala**

More than reaching definitive conclusions, up to now the purpose of the consultation phase has been to outline a panorama which provides a view of the diversity of factors, voices, and experiences that must be taken into account in the PAR phase.

However, it is possible to outline at this moment some of the topics for a global debate on resilience.

1. Even though the term is not commonly used in daily discourse, for many of those consulted the notion of resilience was deemed useful for understanding the forms in which they respond to the daily problems they face.
2. The notion of resilience in some cases was understood to mean resistance.
3. The notion of resilience becomes important when it is understood as a process of transformation, that is, of social change.
4. The identification of actions on the vertical and horizontal levels, as referred to during the consultation phase, reveals a constant interactions between groups and communities, as well as between them and the State's institutions