



Frameworks for Assessing Resilience in Guatemala

Working document
(January 2015)

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Introduction

Interpeace is an international organization whose mission is to assist polarized or violent conflict-afflicted societies to strengthen their social and institutional capacities necessary for preventing violence and building peace. At Interpeace, we understand that peace building is only possible by the commitment of different groups and actors that make up a society to renounce the use of violence as a means of solving their problems and conflicts which are inherent to social and political life. This entails overcoming distrust and separation that underlie the dynamics of polarization and violence by strengthening those elements of social cohesion and legitimacy of politics institutions that allow for effective prevention, management and transformation of violent conflict in society. Instead of working with different actors and groups separately, Interpeace seeks -- through dialogue and strengthening the bonds of trust -- to bridge the gap that separates them and promote the development of operational strategies that will allow them to address the challenges they face in a collaborative fashion.

Over more than ten years of work in the region, Interpeace's Regional Office for Latin America based in Guatemala has developed a variety of experiences in processes of consolidation of peace by facilitating the convergence of different sectors around initiatives undertaken by social actors and the State that would thereafter be implemented within their own frameworks of social and political action.

The experience accumulated by Interpeace over more than twenty years of working in conflictive zones in five continents underlines the need to better understand the specific challenges of peace building in each context and improve operational strategies by adapting them to each specific case. This requires that attention not only be focused on the negative aspects of conflicts that lead to violence but also to identify existing capacities in society to overcome situations of conflict and violence so that strategies devised to transform conflicts do not only address causes and trigger-mechanisms of conflicts but also the strengthening of existing capacities of different social groups and institutions to face them collaboratively.

Nonetheless, the dominant perspective of international interventions in peace building tends to concentrate only on reducing the negative influence of those conflicts in society. In this sense, and with the intention of contributing to international efforts on behalf of peace building, Interpeace has joined in an effort that, over the past years, has been supported by different international aid groups and venues at a global level to explore the contribution that the notion of resilience can make to these efforts.

While it is true that the notion of resilience and its various applications changes according to the nature of the discipline which uses it, for the purposes of peace building the concept refers to the capacity that exists in a society -- in any of its

social or institutional surroundings -- to cope with, overcome, and emerge strengthened from situations of violent conflict. While exploring not only the violent phenomenon but also the conditions that enable a society to confront it, a resilience perspective has the potential to contribute to the identification of existing capacities to confront the challenges imposed by violent conflict.

In this context, Interpeace has initiated the “Frameworks for Assessing Resilience” project as a process to explore the mechanisms by which people face conflictive situations that affect them. Under this project, Interpeace seeks to address the contribution of the resilience perspective to peace building on the basis of those principles and values which are fundamental to the organization: wide-based participation of actors involved in the problem, listening to their voice, and their ownership of the processes as a basis for the legitimacy and sustainability necessary for the consolidation of peace.

In light of the tendency to define resilience from external perspectives and, in the majority of cases, under terms which are alien to the contexts and the people where work is undertaken, the general objective of the “Frameworks for Assessing Resilience” is to contribute to the global debate on this issue on the basis of the perspective of local actors and the identification of guidelines for action that emerge from participatory processes in various countries. It is within that framework that this process is being implemented simultaneously in three countries: East Timor, Liberia, and Guatemala, with the aim in mind of deepening the debate by comparing the experiences of three different cases.

The project in Guatemala contributes to this debate on resilience and peace building from the experience of a society which twenty years after the signing of peace is still characterized by a weak State and the persistence of conflictive and violent dynamics that have continued to adapt and change over the course of the years. This provides a different perspective from that of the other two countries, in which this same process is being undertaken in contexts which are closer in time to previous conflicts.

In the specific case of Guatemala, the objective of this process is to provide national actors with a conceptual and action framework that, on the basis of a participatory identification of the forms in which resilience is expressed in our society, will allow us to identify the existing capacities in society for the transformation of conflicts in nonviolent ways and, thereby, enhance them.

In concrete terms, the participatory process proposed by Interpeace for Guatemala seeks to identify and analyze different resilience factors derived from the ways in which societies and their institutions confront the effects of conflicts and their violent expressions. This objective will be achieved by a broadly-based participatory process based on the methodology of Participatory Action-Based Research (PAR) that Interpeace has adapted for its use.

Under this perspective, the participatory process that Interpeace promotes does not seek to create a space for negotiations or a search for consensus among actors. On the contrary, a diversity of opinions is required as a starting point for creating confidence among the actors. In this sense, dialogue is not an objective in itself but a mechanism through which convergence of actors is sought around a collectively identified problem.

This methodology entails working through different complementary phases: exploratory phase, consultation phase, implementation of PAR phase (national project group and thematic working groups), and evaluation and follow-up phase of the process.

Up to now, the first two phases of the process have been implemented (exploration and consultation), from which the information for this document was extracted. The exploration phase allowed for the identification three thematic core ideas that bring together factors (problems) that require resilient responses and actions: insecurity and violence, socio-environmental conflicts, and fragility of public institutions. On the basis of these thematic core ideas a set of questions was designed that were addressed during the consultation phase by groups in the departments, sectoral groups, and in-depth interviews.

The summary document of the consultation phase is one of the main products of that phase and will provide input for the debate and definition of a thematic agenda which will be expanded upon by the working groups. The information that it contains is the result of the prior consultation process and seeks to set down the diversity of opinions and perspectives that individual persons expressed during the consultation.

For this reason, this country document does not include any conclusions or specific stands concerning the topics discussed. Its character is descriptive and the analysis it proposes is meant to convey the information thus obtained in a systematic fashion.

The country document is an intermediate product that precedes the implementation of the Participatory Action Research. It should be the starting point for the discussions of the thematic working groups, tasked with identifying existing capacities in society which, from the perspective of resilience and peace building, can be strengthened in order to better face the challenges that conflicts in the country place in the way to the consolidation of peace.

The Participatory Action Research process which begins with the discussion of the country document assumes the active involvement of the greatest diversity of social actors and their commitment to the identification of capacities and the search for joint mechanisms to best improve them. The research seeks to discover the convergence of actors committed to the process that, recognizing their

differences, are able to identify points of agreement that will guide them in their search for solutions.

One of the main products that will come out of this project is the confirmation that the political and participatory process will provide the national actors with the necessary mechanisms to strengthen resilience capacities in Guatemalan society and acquire a greater capacity for action in relation to the problems they are facing.

In this sense, the “Frameworks for Assessing Resilience in Guatemala Project” is the beginning of a long-term process that will not be finished when the final results are obtained. Those results will set the foundation upon which to launch the convergence of actors and implementation of joint actions.

1. The debate on resilience

In recent years there has been a growing interest at the international level on how to best understand the sources of fragility and vulnerability of States and societies, especially those that have been affected by armed conflicts. At the same time, this interest has gone hand in hand with the desire to identify and get to know the existence of capacities in societies, communities, and institutions to anticipate risks and overcome the challenges that these present, in a collaborative and non violent manner.¹

The notion of resilience has emerged in this scenario as a way of understanding why some people or groups seek qualitative answers which are different one from the other. However, there does not exist at present a consensus around the notion of resilience and its expressions, so that it is applied and understood differently in various fields of study and intervention, such as physics, psychology and, more recently, in the social sciences.

Based on a reading of the framework provided by the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project, this chapter aims to provide an overview on the use of the notion of resilience in different fields, but also underlines that its definition not only refers specifically to the phenomena which each of these fields addresses but, in addition, that the debate remains open - an increasingly rich one as time passes - on the phenomena which it encompasses and how it goes about identifying each in reality.

For Interpeace, it is highly important to join in these discussions about resilience on the basis of the experiences and opinions of social actors involved in the

¹ McCandless, Erin and Graeme Simpson. *Assessing Resilience for Peacebuilding*. A discussion document. Interpeace, 2014.

Framework for an Analysis of Resilience project rather than build upon definitions already established and then attempt to fit such experiences into them.

The emphasis of this dialogue with social actors is placed on the possible confluences, interactions or existing linkages between the resilience capacities identified by the actors and peace building understood as a long-term social process.

1.1 An overview of the use of the notion of resilience

The study of resilience originates in the physical sciences and has been applied especially in engineering, where it is used to describe that capacity of certain metals to store energy and withstand shocks or impacts, and thereafter return to their original state. However, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s the concept acquired new meanings with its use mainly in the fields of ecology, social work, and psychology.

The evolution of the concept of resilience can be traced along at least three stages of research.² The first of these has focused on the search for genetic characteristics and/or development at an individual level, where evolutionary psychology has made advances. The second stage of research is marked by an interest to overcome this individualistic psychological perspective and provide the term with a more dynamic sense by integrating the role played by family, social and community circles, as has been the case of the social sciences and ecosystemic theories. And thirdly, we find the last stage more concerned with promoting resilience in its application of different sectors and groups in society.

In the first stage, the principal focus of psychology was on groups and individuals who, regardless of the adversities they faced, did not change their behaviour. In addition, the discussion centred around the questions about whether qualities and abilities observed in certain groups or individuals could be considered innate or were the product of social development, to what extent biological attributes played a role and if there was sufficient data to support the psychological premises that show why certain individuals can be more or less resilient than others.³

On the other hand, criticism of the resilience outlook that is used by psychology point to the emphasis that it has given to traumatic aspects that affect the lives of people in detriment of an assessment of the positive aspects that might emerge from these same experiences and the capacities of individuals to face them. From this perspective, that privileges a focus on positive aspects, resilience is understood as “the capacity of a person or group to continue to look forward

² Valdebenito, Erika; Juana Mereces Loizo and Olga García. “Resiliencia: una mirada cualitativa”. In: *Fundamentos en Humanidades*. Universidad Nacional de San Luis, Argentina. Año X, Núm. 1 (19, 2009) pp. 195-206.

³ McCandless and Simpson, p. 8.

regardless of destabilizing events, of difficult living conditions, and of sometimes serious trauma.”⁴

The second stage of the study of the notion of resilience sought to go beyond an understanding of the individual aspects of people who confront a trauma in order to take into account the influence of other types of factors such as environmental and social ones. This is the case of ecology, where the notion of resilience has been used to understand the impact of natural disasters on people and the way in which they cope with them. From this perspective, it is indispensable “to recognize the complex interactions of response mechanisms in social and environmental systems.”⁵

In general terms, the diversity of concepts of resilience within the field of ecology and attention to natural disasters brings together two important aspects. The first of these is the capacity to anticipate phenomena and the second is the relational character of both the development of capacities as well as the physical and social conditions where impacts are produced. A more specific approach to resilience that refers to natural disasters focuses on the qualities and attributes of communities much more than on aspects of an individual nature or the vulnerabilities of social groups. Finally, the resilience focus for the reduction and management of disasters integrates the concept with the prevention dimension, considered to be an existing capacity in social groups.

This preventive dimension of resilience has been echoed in the field of social work which, traditionally focused on poverty and socioeconomic exclusion, has adopted the term given the discipline’s role in evaluation, education and guidance. The coincidence of objectives between social work and resilience allows for a redimensioning of the difficulties associated with the aforementioned problems no longer in terms of crises but of the existing capacities in groups: “It is not a matter of setting down utopian positions to avoid pain, crisis, etc. but to confront them under a positive connotation.”⁶

The third stage in the development of the concept of resilience is marked less by the discussion of its nature and its field and more by the applicability of the notion to different situations of intervention among populations considered vulnerable in specific contexts, for example, populations of young people and women.

In the case of youth, the notion of resilience has centred on the comparison of individual attributes and experiences in contexts in which young people are

⁴ Vera Poseck, Beatriz. “Resistir y rehacerse: una recontextualización de la experiencia traumática desde la psicología positiva”.

⁵ De Weijer, Frauke. “Resilience: a Trojan horse for a new way of thinking?” In: McCandless, Erin and Graeme Simpson, *Assessing Resilience for Peacebuilding*, Desk Review. Working paper, Interpeace, 2014.

⁶ Quintero Velásquez, Ángela María. “Resiliencia: contexto no clínico para trabajo social”. Paper presented at the X Encuentro Interinstitucional “Trabajo Social, Resiliencia y dolor”. Universidad de Guadalajara, Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades. México, Octubre 7 de 2004.

exposed to conflictive, violent and marginalizing situations. In work with populations of women, resilience is applied to problems which, in countries with histories of conflict or fragility, mainly affect women such as assassinations, mutilations, sexual violence and exploitation, kidnappings, forced marriages and pregnancies, and increased exposure to HIV/Aids. By considering women much more than victims, the resilience focus centres on modification of roles and traditional stereotypes under which women are perceived. In this manner, active and decisive roles are underlined in addressing specific demands and needs, as well as other issues that affect society as a whole, for example, socioeconomic conditions and access to land and basic services.

In summary, this brief overview of the use and understanding about the notion of resilience from the perspective of different disciplines provides an idea of the growing diversity of outlooks and how the concept is understood and applied, which varies in accordance with the field in which it is used and the types of questions each discipline poses.

1.2 Resilience and peace building in Guatemala

During the last years, in some international quarters a growing interest has emerged concerning the sources of fragility and resilience in the context of fragile and conflict-affected States. This interest represents a significant change in the way that conflicts and conflictive situations are perceived, which range all the way from focusing on those factors that generate conflict to seeking out the capacities of social groups that allow them to cope, that is, that allow societies, communities and institutions to anticipate risks, resolve problems in a collaborative and non violent way, respond creatively to conflicts and crises, and direct social change in such a manner that it transforms the structural bases of conflicts for the benefit of peace and development.⁷

In this sense, peace building finds points of coincidence with the discussions about the capacities of social groups to confront challenges that are imposed upon them by the fragility of the State and society. One of these points is to conceive of peace as more than point of destination that is defined automatically at the end of an armed conflict and consider it as a long-term process that aims to constantly strengthen social capacities in order to transform conflicts in non violent ways.

During its work in Guatemala, Interpeace has reckoned that the process of peace building in the country requires addressing factors which determine social conflict. Interpeace recognizes that conflict is inherent in the political and social life of human groups insofar as they express a diversity of ideas, interests, and agendas. Thus, conflict is a positive influence for social change if it is kept within non violent channels. On the contrary, if conflict is badly handled it becomes a factor that

⁷ McCandless, Erin and Graeme Simpson. *Assessing Resilience for Peacebuilding*. A discussion document. Interpeace, 2014.

heightens social tensions and can turn violent, thereby damaging the cohesion of social groups and the legitimacy of institutions.⁸

The way in which conflict is understood is fundamental in defining the type of action that social change requires. In this regards, Interpeace seeks to establish an analytical difference between conflictive situations and conflicts. In the first case, reference is made to factors of a structural and long-term nature that over time reproduce the negative conditions that are expressed in diverse phenomena such as social polarization, distrust among people, violence and a lack of legitimacy in public institutions. Conflicts, then, are the concrete and diverse expressions that are generated constantly among different social actors and which, in some cases, turn to violence. Conflicts vary over time with regards to their immediate causes but structural causes underlie them which, if not resolved, aggravate social relations constantly among groups and between them and the State.

At present, it is no longer possible to explain and address the situation in Guatemala from a perspective of a post-war society. Peace, understood as a condition that followed after the end of the armed conflict, is an aspiration that was overwhelmed by the persistence of conflictive situations and by the various incomplete and limited reforms inherited from the post-war years. Guatemala's citizenry must face not only the effects of natural disasters but also persistent social phenomena such as poverty, inequality, corruption, and violence.

In this sense, peace building, as a framework for action geared to social change, deems it fundamental to transform conflicts in order to direct social forces towards common objectives that will overcome the obstacles to peaceful coexistence. This requires identifying not only the factors that produce conflicts but the capacities of social groups and institutions to confront them.

While the importance of an approach centred on the capacities for resilience of human groups that face conflicts is recognized, to date there is no precise definition of resilience as it applies to peace building. For this reason, the main challenges posed by the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project are, on the one hand, to understand the contributions that the notion of resilience has to offer in the efforts of peace building (on a conceptual level) and, on the other, to comprehend, in the voice of the social actors, the ways in which social groups confront problems, that is, their capacity for resilience (on an existential level).

In order to contribute to the debate and the action from a participatory perspective, the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project proposes an analytical strategy that takes into account the following key aspects:

⁸ *Strategic Position Paper*. Interpeace, June 2011.

- 1) Actions (responses) of social groups in the face of priority problems in their surroundings.
- 2) Articulation of the actions as a function of their contribution to the creation or detriment of social capital and social cohesion.
- 3) Identification of existing capacities among the social groups from which depends the type of actions that are implemented.

The actions implemented in the face of the problems identified by the social groups need to be placed in their specific contexts since in this manner it will be possible to understand the influence exercised by the social, cultural, and economic surroundings on the capacities for resilience of a given social group.

From a perspective of peace building, it is within the social contexts that social capital and the latent conflicts in the social group can be observed, as the necessary dimensions for observing the level of existing social cohesion.

According to the conceptual framework of the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project, social capital is defined as:

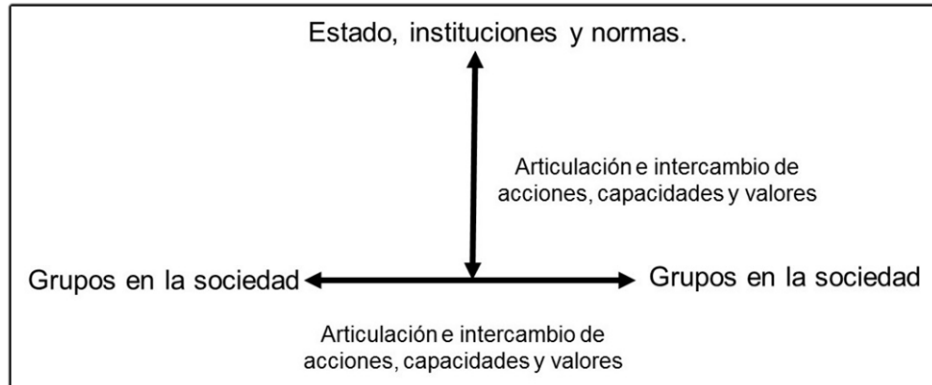
“the social and cultural internal coherence of the society, the norms and values that govern the interactions among people and institutions in which they are imbedded. Social capital is the glue that keeps societies united, without which there can be no economic growth or human well-being.”⁹

From this perspective, societies with strong social capital and an absence of latent conflicts point to capacities for resilience which tend to overcome or confront problems without recourse to violence. In other cases where there is weakness in social capital and latent conflicts, recourse to violence then contributes to a detriment of social cohesion and, as a consequence, an increase in social conflicts.

Social capital and conflicts can be observed both at a vertical as well as a horizontal level. The vertical level is reached in the articulation and exchange of capacities among groups in society and the State, with the intermediation of institutions and norms (linking). The horizontal level is associated with the relations within (bonding) and among (bridging) the groups in a society within different spheres such as the family, religious groups, civil and political organizations, commercial groupings, and other forms of organization based on conditions of gender and ethnicity, among others.

⁹ McCandless, Erin and Graeme Simpson, p. 22.

Levels of Analysis of Actions



To better understand the role that actions and levels of articulation play in peace building, the analytical framework adopted by the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project is based on the assumption that development and the articulation of actions implemented in the face of problems can be analyzed on the basis of existing capacities in social groups. The relation between problems-actions-capacities implies recognizing that their existence does not necessarily mean that they always contribute to improved social cohesion. As will be seen later on, this relation, in certain specific contexts, can work in detriment of ideal conditions of social cohesion needed to overcome fragility in the State and in society.

According to the conceptual debate about the notion of resilience, these capacities can be defined as absorption, adaptation, and transformation, as illustrated in the following table:

Rigidez	Flexibilidad	Cambio
Capacidad de absorción	Capacidad de adaptación	Capacidad de transformación
(<i>Persistencia</i>)	(<i>Ajuste incremental</i>)	(<i>Respuestas transformadoras</i>)
		
RESILIENCIA		

In general terms, the capacity of absorption assumes that the responses to problems allow the problem to persist to such an extent that the social groups incorporate it into their own dynamic; the capacity of adaptation allows for a coexistence with the problem by incorporating certain of its aspects in order to deal with it; and the capacity of transformation implies a change or transformation of the problem which the social group faces.

In conclusion, in order to understand the contributions of the notion of resilience to a peace building perspective, Interpeace believes it is necessary to take into account the following aspects:

- Understand resilience as a complex system that includes multiple capacities for response, conditioned in turn by the interaction among actors and structures in a specific context.
- These capacities to respond can be expressed via (either singly or together): absorption, adaptation and/or transformation.
- These responses are generated and can have an impact on one or various levels of the social structure (individual, family, community, region, nation).
- Actions (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 over time - helps identify their effectiveness for transformation, an essential foundation for peace building.
- The context and the conditions of the conjuncture help to identify structural aspects in the face of which resilience capacities are developed; in other words, resilience to what?

The change of focus that is involved in a resilience perspective - which means not only considering shortcomings or problems but also taking into account the capacities of individuals, groups, families, communities and institutions, and the different relationships they establish - offers new possibilities for addressing the threats in peace building.

2. Methodological approach

The implementation of the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project is built around a design based on Participatory Action Research (PAR), that Interpeace has adopted as part of its focus on the different contexts where the organization works. Under this perspective, the PAR is understood as “a research methodology and at the same time a procedure for social intervention that proposes the analysis of reality as a means of knowing and becoming sensitized so that those involved can, via this procedure, become active subjects and agents of a process of development and transformation of their more immediate surrounding and reality.

The principal objective of carrying out participatory action research is to provide stakeholders with ownership of the process to overcome their problems.”¹⁰

The process involved in the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* in the case of Guatemala will be implemented according to the following phases:

- Exploratory phase
- Consultation phase
- Implementation phase of the PAR (national project group and thematic working groups)
- Evaluation and follow-up phase

2.1 Exploratory phase

The objective of this first phase was to define a methodological strategy to start-up the discussion on resilience according to the country context.

It was developed through focus groups and interviews. The focus groups were held in the departments of Sololá and Petén, and the interviews were conducted with actors at a national level. These activities aimed to gather information on two central aspects: the principal problems identified by the participants as well as the responses to cope with them.

The information that was gathered was used to define the criteria employed to select the areas and the participating actors in the following consultation phase.

With the idea in mind of relating theoretical knowledge about the concept of resilience with the everyday practices of the actors identified in the exploratory phase, a focus group was held with experts in the field of social psychology. The discussion revolved around the analytical implications of the use of the term of resilience in specific contexts such as that of Guatemala, and led to addressing the following issues:

- The specific forms of response at the local and regional levels.
- The social linkages through which people devise strategies and responses in the face of problems.
- The assessment that individuals make about their own actions and linkages; that is, what is the use of that being done y with whom is it being done.

As a result of this exploratory phase, two principal results were identified. The first, based on the principle that resilience must be defined with regards to factors that require a response, identified three thematic core ideas that bring together a variety of problems that require responses and capacities by the population. These core ideas are:

¹⁰ *Diálogo y participación, guía práctica para la definición de políticas públicas en el sector de salud pública*. Guatemala: Interpeace, Oficina Regional para Latinoamérica, 2014.

The core idea of **socio-environmental conflictive situations**, that refers to conflicts that result from damage to the natural environment and the dispute over natural resources.

The core idea of **violence and insecurity**, that refers to violent criminal actions including assaults, kidnappings, extortions, homicides, domestic violence and violence against women, as well as the proliferation of organized criminal groups, especially those linked to drug smuggling and arms and people trafficking.

The core idea of the **fragility of public institutions**, that refers to the incompetence, inactivity or inefficiency of the institutions of the State that are called on to comply with the legal mandate under which they were created.

The second result was the definition of the methodological strategy for the consultation phase, for which answers to the following questions were required: 1) who should participate in the consultation; 2) how should it be organized; and 3) where should it take place.

Who should participate in the consultation?

One of the basic criteria of the work done by Interpeace is that the contents of the substantive topics that are discussed in the participatory processes are grounded on the voice of the actors directly involved in them.

This has been one of the overarching criteria for the *Framework for Assessing Resilience* project in the three countries where it is being implemented, which demands that the reference frameworks and measuring tools of international interventions not be developed exclusively by “leading experts” but through the participation of a variety of sectors.¹¹

For this reason, the exploratory phase allowed us to determine that the sample should contemplate one level of participation at the departmental level and another at a sectoral level.

At the departmental level, the composition of the groups was established as follows:

- Sectors or organizations related to issues identified in the exploratory phase;
- Local officials of public institutions;
- Individuals with a capacity for generating public opinion;
- People who have done analysis or worked in interventions related to the issues;

¹¹ *Frameworks for Assessing Resilience*, Concept Note.

- Religious institutions;
- Authorities of indigenous communities; and
- Local political leaders.

At a sectoral level, the sample included the following groups:

- Women's organizations;
- Young people's organizations;
- Indigenous people's organizations;
- Political parties;
- Organizations working to defend land and resist land encroachments; and
- Business sector.

In order to include all those actors who are not organized by sectors, Interpeace has in addition planned a survey with the support of a team affiliated with Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA) that will complement the qualitative information gathered during the consultation phase. This survey will be carried out after the implementation of the PAR.

How should the consultation be carried out?

It was agreed that the methodology employed in this phase would involve consultation groups, which were conceived as spaces for discussion made up of diverse actors from the sample mentioned above.

These groups would work at two levels:

- 1) Departmental consultation groups.
- 2) Sectoral consultations groups.

In addition, at least three in-depth interviews with local actors were contemplated in each of the departments that make up the sample.

Where should the consultation take place?

Even though the problems identified during the exploratory phase can be found all over the country, it was necessary to select some departments¹² that would provide an understanding of their dynamic with regards to different socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the different regions.

The criteria employed to select the departments were the following:

¹² The political administrative division of Guatemala is structured around "departments" and these, in turn, around municipalities. There are currently 22 departments and 335 municipalities within the national territory.

1. *Ethnic-cultural composition.* The sample of the selected departments sought to include not only those with a majority of indigenous population but also some with a majority of non-indigenous population. In the case of Guatemala, this difference is expressed in distinct cultural, social and historic traits linked to territory.
2. *Socioeconomic situation.* The sample of the selected departments sought to include those with different socioeconomic indicators as employed conventionally to describe the socioeconomic condition of the country. This will identify the influence exercised by various factors upon resilience in a given social group as expressed in the responses and actions in different socioeconomic contexts in the country.
3. *Existence and persistence of one or various problems* grouped together as factors to which the society is resilient: socio-environmental conflictive situations, violence and insecurity, and fragility of public institutions.

According to these criteria, the selected departments were classified in the following manner:

Department	Ethnic-cultural composition	Socioeconomic situation
Guatemala	<p>Reflects the greatest ethnic diversity of the country. Ethnic composition: 87.7% ladinos, 8.1% Kaqchikeles, 1.7% K'iches', and 2.5% other groups. Total population: 3,103,685 inhabitants.</p>	<p>16% of the population below the poverty line. 6.9% illiteracy in 2010. 26.3% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 78.1 (per 100,000 inhabitants).</p>
Quiché	<p>Population mostly indigenous. Ethnic composition: 60.7% K'iche', 13.3% Ixil, 11.6% ladino, 6.6% Q'eqchi', 1.9% Poqomchi', 1.4% Q'anjobal, 1.3% Sakapulteko, 1.1% Mam, 1.0% Uspanteko, 1.1% others. Total population: 921 thousand inhabitants.</p>	<p>55% of population in poverty and 26% in extreme poverty. 35.4% illiteracy in 2010. 72.2% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 7.4 (per 100,000 inhabitants).</p>
Totonicapán	<p>Population mostly indigenous. Ethnic composition: 97.9% K'iche', 1.7% ladino, 0.5% others. Total population: 461,838 inhabitants.</p>	<p>52% of population in poverty and 20% in extreme poverty. 21.8% illiteracy rate in 2010. 82.2% chronic child malnutrition rate.</p>

		According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 4.3 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
San Marcos	Population mostly ladino Ethnic composition: 71.0% ladino, 27.0% Mam, 1.3% Sipakapense, 0.7% others. Total population: 995,742 inhabitants.	46% of population in poverty and 20% in extreme poverty. 20.3% illiteracy in 2010. 53.5% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 16.6 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
Huehuetenango	Population mostly indigenous. Ethnic composition: 35.4% ladino, 24.8% Mam, 17.2% Q'anjolab, 7.4% Chuj, 5.2% Jakalteko, 4.5% Akateko, 2.4% K'iche', 1.1% Awakateko, 2.0% others. Total population: 1,114,389 inhabitants.	49% of population in poverty and 22% in extreme poverty. 27.3% illiteracy in 2010. 69.5% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 15.9 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
Jalapa	Population most ladino Ethnic composition: 85.1% ladino, 10.1% Poqomam, 4.8% others. Total population: 309,908 inhabitants.	39% of population in poverty and 23% in extreme poverty. 26.5% illiteracy in 2010. 49.3% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 48.4 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
Zacapa	Population most ladino. Ethnic composition: 99.4% ladino, 0.6% others. Total population: 218,510 inhabitants.	35% of population in poverty and 19% in extreme poverty. 15.1% illiteracy in 2010. 45.9% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 76 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
Izabal	Population mostly ladino. Ethnic composition: 77.1% ladino, 20.9% Q'eqchi', 0.9% Garífuna, 1.0% others. Total population: 403,256 inhabitants.	32% of population in poverty and 19% in extreme poverty. 21.5% illiteracy in 2010. 40.4% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 64 (per 100,000 inhabitants).

Alta Verapaz	Population mostly indigenous. Ethnic composition: 79.9% Q'eqchi', 10.9% Poqomchi', 7.4% ladino, 1.7% others. Total population: 1,078,942 inhabitants.	36% of population in poverty and 43% in extreme poverty. 31.8% illiteracy in 2010. 59.4% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 17.2 (per 100,000 inhabitants).
Petén	Population mostly ladino. Ethnic composition: 70.1% ladino, 25.2% Q'eqchi', 1.2% Kaqchikel, 3.4% others. Total population: 613,693 inhabitants.	42% of population in poverty and 15% in extreme poverty. 14.7% illiteracy in 2010. 41.9% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 59.6 per 100,000 inhabitants).
Escuintla	Population mostly ladino. Ethnic composition: 93.5% ladino, 1.9% K'iche', 1.5% Poqomam, 1.3% Kaqchikel, 1.7% otros. Total population: 685,830 inhabitants.	36% of population in poverty and 5% in extreme poverty. 15.1% illiteracy in 2010. 32.4% chronic child malnutrition rate. According to 2010 data, the homicide rate was 77.9 (per 100,000 inhabitants).

Source: Data on human development. Statistical collection by department. Various issues, UNDP, 2011.

The criteria for selecting the groups for the sectoral consultation took into account the contrast between the departmental perspective and a national vision in the form of organizations and groupings whose interests are not limited to a specific geographic surrounding and whose concerns and interests are of a national character. Each group selected for the sectoral consultation was made up of representatives of different organizations and institutions linked to each sector. The following sectors were chosen:

- 1) Women's sector;
- 2) Indigenous sector;
- 3) Young people's sector;
- 4) Private sector;
- 5) Political sector (political parties); and
- 6) Sector of organizations in resistance.

The exploratory phase also produced information that served to prioritize the problems in the face of which the social groups need to develop capacities of resilience in each department. On the basis of this selection, the departments were organized along the following lines:

**Selected departments
according to priority of thematic core issue**

Region/Department	Thematic priority	Fragility of public institutions
Central		
Guatemala	Violence and insecurity	
West		
Quiché	Socio-environmental conflictive situations.	
Totonicapán	Socio-environmental conflictive situations.	
San Marcos	Socio-environmental conflictive situations.	
Huehuetenango	Socio-environmental conflictive situations. Violence and insecurity.	
Northeast		
Jalapa	Socio-environmental conflictive situations.	
Zacapa	Violence and insecurity.	
Izabal	Violence and insecurity.	
North		
Alta Verapaz	Socio-environmental conflictive situations. Violence and insecurity.	
Petén	Socio-environmental conflictive situations. Violence and insecurity.	
South		
Escuintla	Violence and insecurity.	

The classification of the eleven departments according to the priority list of problems did not mean that in the consultation process the other problems identified at a national level were not considered at the same level of importance in the discussions. The methodological design of the consultation phase needed to integrate the thematic core ideas independently of the priority assigned to each given the systemic character of conflict situations in the country, as a result of which their difference is of an analytical character.

2.2 Consultation phase

The consultation phase sought to deepen understanding, through a wide-ranging participation of social actors, of the issues concerning the main problems of the country, of the responses that society implements to confront them, of the capacities of the population to implement those responses, of the significance those actions have, and of their priorities as defined by the social groups.

The consultation phase took place between August and December and involved a total of 316 individuals.

**Total number of interviews
and of groups consulted**

Activities	Number
Groups consulted at departmental level	11
Groups consulted by sectors	6
Interviews	40

The total number of people consulted represents a wide and diverse group of organizations and public and private institutions, as illustrated in the following graph.



In the case of **names** assigned to actors who represent civil society or the public sector, it was decided to respect their self-assigned identities. However, for descriptive reasons, the following table offers a generalization of all participants

by aggregating those who attended as members of a local or national public institution under the title of “public sector” and those who do not belong to this sector under the title of “civil society.” Also aggregated were those individuals who participated as members of a political party.

**Number of participants in the consultation phase
according to their sector of origin**

Sector/Strategy	Consultation groups	Sectoral groups	Interviews	Total by sector
Public sector	84	0	13	97
Civil society	111	76	27	214
Political parties	0	5	0	5
Totals	195	81	40	316

Implementation of the consultation groups

For each of the consultation groups, both departmental as well as sectoral, the methodological guidelines defined three sections.

First section. This consisted of a plenary discussion which addressed the following question: Which are the problems which most affect the group/community/sector? This question was asked to open up the discussion among the participants.

Second section. All the participants were divided into three discussion sub-groups according to the thematic core issues defined in the previous exploratory phase (violence and insecurity, socioeconomic conflicts, and fragility of public institutions). These groups (of between 6 and 10 participants) discussed five questions that sought to bring to the fore those aspects which, as observed during the work, are not always evident in the actions of the subjects. The questions were devised in everyday terms, in order that they empathize with the life experiences of the individuals.

The following table lists and explains the questions posed during the discussions in the groups:

Question posed for discussion in the consultation groups	Factors to explore
Question 1: “What do people do to cope/confront from day to day the	Concrete actions that are carried out without assigning a value judgement to

difficulties derived from this problem?"	whether said action "ought to have been carried out" or not.
Question 2: "In order to confront the difficulties produced by this situation, who organizes and in which ways? Who contribute and help?"	Actors, understood as subjects – individuals or collectives – or institutions that carry out the action. Formal or informal networks that are created, as well as the interactions and exchanges among actors.
Question 3: "What is done in the family to face these situations? What is done in the community? What is done by the State?"	Surroundings in which action takes place, but also those in which the action has an impact.
Question 4: "What use have the actions described had for you?"	Levels of impact. As the question implies, the perceptions of the participants are sought concerning the social efficacy of the actions, as well as their sustainability.
Question 5: "Why is it important for you to do something or not to do anything?"	In addition to inquire about how the actions are assessed (good, bad, correct, mistaken, according to the terms employed by the participants), the question also seeks to understand the arguments and justifications for the actions.

Third section. After the discussions of the sub-groups, all the participants met once again for a final group discussion. The discussion centred around the presentations by the sub-groups of those issues to deal with in the future on a priority basis. The identification of these priority issues is very important as it allows for a visualization in succinct and concrete terms of the issues that in the opinion of the citizenry should be addressed by decision makers and political actors at the national level in order to carry out transformations in current conditions which today are a matter of concern.

Preparation of the summary document of the consultation phase

The consultation phase ended with the preparation of a *Country Document* that brings together in an orderly fashion the results and the information obtained through the departmental and sectoral consultation groups and the interviews.

This *summary document of the consultation phase* does not pretend to present conclusions. On the contrary, it seeks to set down the diversity of opinions and perspectives that each of the participating social sectors have with regards to the same problems. In this manner, the *Country Document* will reflect the voices of the participating sectors during the consultation phase.

In order to prepare the *summary document of the consultation phase*, two complementary phases were devised: a summary of the information and a strategy for analysis.

Summary of the information. The information obtained during the consultation phase was summarized by means of two instruments. The first of them was an aide-mémoire prepared *in situ*¹³ that contains a transcript of the discussions in each of the sessions.

A second instrument is the minutes of work which reflect the principal aspects of the development of the meetings in each department and sectoral group.

Each consultation group has at its disposal both instruments, which can be accessed for information when necessary.

With regards to the interviews, they inquired in more depth about issues that were not addressed during the consultation groups due to lack of time or insufficient confidence among the participants. These interviews, on the other hand, were viewed as expressions of confidence by the participants towards the institution. For that reason, verbatim citations have been placed within quotes and italics in the rest of this text without any identification of the person who spoke them.

Strategy of analysis. On the basis of the summary of information, the writing of this document was guided by an analytical-descriptive logic more with the idea of organizing and summarizing the information gathered rather than providing an analytical interpretation.

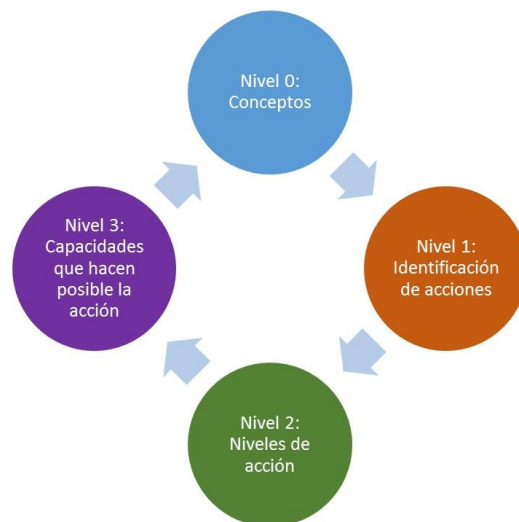
As mentioned previously, the PAR methodology does not seek to build upon previously defined concepts without the participation of the actors involved in the political process nor to generate definitive conclusions or interpretations prior to the in-depth discussions that the PAR groups must carry out. For this reason, the strategy for analysis employed for preparing the Country Document seeks to present the results and information obtained from different angles and different levels of analysis.

The strategy for analysis has been organized on three levels:

¹³ In addition to these aide memoires, there is the material prepared by the participants during the meetings (notes, photos, video, flip-chart) and a digital archive with audio recordings of all the meetings and interviews.

- Included in the first level of analysis are the responses and actions undertaken by the population to confront the diversity of identified problems, as well as the recurrent frequency of said actions (that is, which are more frequent and which are not) and the possible contextual aspects that might be related to such frequency.
- At the second level of analysis are included the actions that take place on a horizontal plane (among groups), on a vertical plane (between groups and institutions) and on an individual level.
- At the third level of analysis actions are included in relation to the existing capacities in communities, groups or institutions.

The following graph illustrates the logic of the strategy of analysis employed to prepare this document.



The information is also organized according to the significance which the actions have for the participating groups in the consultation phase. The significance was important in the group discussions since it explains the existential motivation that drives actions to confront the identified problems.

The material obtained in the consultation phase was organized within an analytic organizational matrix made up of descriptive categories that allowed them to be included in an ordered and logical manner in this document. These categories are:

- *Resilience to what?* This refers to the problem issues identified by the participants.

- *Capacities*. Classified according to the given levels of action: vertical, horizontal (both group based) or individual.
- *Actors*. Refers to the relevant actors (individual and group) mentioned by the participants.
- *Types of resilience*. Defined by the participants according to the efficacy and duration in time of the actions described.
- *Meanings*. Refers to the existential and final dimension that propels actions aimed at confronting a given problem.
- *Priorities*. Refers to the themes and issues that according to the participants merited follow-up. These priorities are classified according to the surrounding where they have impact or are generated (family, community, and State).

Limitations of the consultation

The first of the difficulties faced was the impossibility of covering all the departments. Both limitations of time allotted for the project and of the availability of sufficient human resources for a wider consultation influenced the decision to cover 11 of the 22 departments of the country.

These same factors also influenced the decision to hold only one group meeting in the each of the departments, which represents a methodological limitation to the extent that we were unable establish initial contacts that would have made for a more effective call to participate.

Reference should also be made to the fact that both in the departmental consultation groups and in the sectoral groups not all representatives of each locality or sector attended so that the opinions and ideas expressed must be attributed specifically to those who participated in the process.

It is necessary to allude to the negative perception expressed by some of the participants in the sense that it is the lack of trust among actors that limits the possibilities for dialogue as a tool for building social consensus. Along similar lines, the weakness of dialogue as a tool was evident in the little willingness expressed by some people who declined the invitation to participate because they had no interest in sharing a space with representatives of sectors which they consider their adversaries. These situations were more evident in departments where conflictive situations currently exist involving disputes over access and control of natural resources. On the other hand, where groups were more homogeneous (as in the case of the sectoral groups) the discussions were more open, although this also contributed to a more homogeneous perspective on the issues that were addressed.

In that scenario, one of the most important challenges was presenting the interest of Interpeace and the *Framework for an Analysis of Resilience* project to promote dialogue with the aim of generating new knowledge and attitudes for social

change. In each of the work sessions we insisted on the importance of an exchange of opinions within a framework of respect in order to get to know the various perspectives without attempting at this stage to reach conclusions or agreements based on consensus.

2.3 Implementation phase of PAR (national project group and thematic working groups)

Upon completion of the consultation phase and the summary, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) will begin.

This phase requires two complementary processes: the organization of a National Group that brings together all the key actors of a society, as well as the organization of thematic Working Groups.

As a result of this process, recommendations are expected that will lead to new linkages among the various social sectors and the State to identify new forms of recognizing their capacities to face conflictive situations, as well as improved opportunities for governance.

Bringing the National Project Group and the Working Groups together

The National Group is the guiding body of the process and will be made up of individuals who represent at a high level the various institutions and offices of the State, organizations of civil society identified with the issues to be discussed, the private sector and individuals with experience and knowledge of the issues that can be invited on a personal basis.

The National Group will have the following attributions, among others:

1. Define the research agenda of the entire PAR process, which includes specifying the issues that the Working Groups will have to deal with in depth.
2. Appoint technical advisors to put together the Working Groups for the implementation of the PAR process.
3. Approval of results and preparation of consensus proposals.

Preparing the research agenda implies identifying the issues that will be discussed in depth in the Working Groups. Each Working Group will be organized around a specific issue. The National Group will define the criteria and appoint the Working Groups.

The Working Groups will be made up of representative individuals from the various organizations that participate in the National Group as well as technical personnel appointed by them. The Working Groups will be permanent and stable groups while

the process lasts and work in an organized form in weekly or fortnightly sessions as they see fit.

The Working Groups help to gather the necessary information on the issues which will be addressed to generate discussion and thereby constitute the nucleus of the participatory research that will result in proposals and lines of action based on the active participation of all social actors. It is in these spaces that the full potential and richness of diverse and complementary opinions will be attained to the extent that they stimulate and support the participation of each actor on the basis of her/his knowledge, experiences, capacities, abilities and interests.

The development of the tasks entrusted to the working groups is central to a process of this nature and its guidance falls to the researcher and facilitator assigned to each group. These groups are charged with supervising the different stages of the work, both with regards to content as well as methods. The work of the Groups is the essence of the Participatory Action Research since it is in this space that this methodology can be applied fully.

In support of the work of the thematic groups a participatory survey is contemplated, a tool for quantitative measurement that will be carried out on the basis of the inputs and expressed needs of the Group members to be incorporated into the design and implementation of the national level survey. Both the development as well as the results of this survey will later be placed at the disposal of the National Group for their comments.

To complement the above, an Enlarged National Group will be created, which will involve the actors who participate in the National Group plus local actors. This body will only meet on two occasions, one at the beginning of the PAR process and the other at the end of the process to validate the results obtained.

2.4 Evaluation phase and follow-up process

The permanent observation, record-keeping, and summary of the PAR process represent another tool that will enable us to continue devising the theoretical and practical processes that will bring us closer to the real objectives set down, achieve them, and even modify them if need be. This vision is based on the belief that experiences do not represent an absolute end in themselves. On the contrary: they are dynamic, as are all social processes. For this reason, they contribute to expanding and enriching the process.

Under this order of ideas, we propose that the design of the mechanisms and instruments that will be used to evaluate the process, as is the case of all previous phases, be the result of a participatory exercise which will involve a profound reflexion on all those aspects, objective and subjective, that enabled the process to achieve results. It is an internal reflexion and not foreign or artificial with regards to the process itself. One of the main challenges of the evaluation is to

define the criteria and the indicators upon which the evaluation tools will be implemented. This definition must come about in an open and consensus-based fashion so that criteria and indicators are consistent with the nature of the process. The objective is to avoid that an artificial evaluation produce wrong perceptions about the process and, thereby, weaken its legitimacy and trust.

The design of the follow-up of the process is a new point of departure. It is at this moment that all efforts made during the process can be translated into initial actions that will give form to the proposals put forth.

The follow-up should be analyzed not only from the perspective of the implementation of the proposals but also define all possible avenues of action that together can continue to drive the actors beyond the process itself.

3. General context

The Republic of Guatemala is located in Central America and border with Mexico to the northwest, with Belize to the northeast, with Honduras and El Salvador to the east and with the Pacific Ocean to the south. Its area is 108,890 square kilometres and according to official figures its total population in 2012 was 15,073,375¹⁴, which means it is the most populous country in Central America. It is also the country with the largest indigenous population, equal to about 40.3% of the total population¹⁵ while the ladino or mestizo population represents about 59.4% of the total, with small complements of garífunas (of African descent) of about 0.2% and xincas with 0.1%. According to the text of the Accords for a Firm and Durable Peace signed in December 1996, Guatemala is a country made up of four peoples: maya¹⁶, garífuna, xinca, and ladino.

The average age of Guatemalans is 20 years, the lowest in all of Central America, which makes for a country that is quite young. Nonetheless, life expectancy at birth is on average 71.4 years (67.9 for men and 75 for women), the lowest in the region. Women make up a majority of the population: 51.22% versus 48.77% for men. According to some indicators, economic participation and opportunities for women are inferior to those for men in a proportion of 2-3 in all variables: participation in the labour force, income equality for similar work, estimated

¹⁴ “Caracterización estadística República de Guatemala 2012”. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, noviembre 2013.

¹⁵ All statistics, except where otherwise noted, are from data of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

¹⁶ The Maya population is composed of a diversity of sociocultural and linguistic expressions, among which are Achi, Akateco, Awakateco, Chorti, Chuj, Itza, Ixil, Jakalteco, Qanjobal, Kaqchikel, K’iche’, Mam, Mopan, Poqomam, Poqomchi, Q’eqchi, Sakapulteko, Sikapakense, Tectiteco, Tz’utujil y Uspanteco. Taken from the text of the *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, subscribed on 31 March 1995.

income, participation in higher office and participation in professional and technical fields.¹⁷

With regards to education, official data reveal that 15.38% of the population over 15 years of age is illiterate¹⁸; however, other studies estimate that illiteracy is up to 25.2%.¹⁹ Public education is more accessible at the elementary level and its coverage declines at the higher levels. According to the last census carried out in 2002, only 3.6% of Guatemalans have had access to higher education. With regards to health, infant malnutrition has gained prominence as a cause for worry at the national level in the last years. This affects 49% of children under five years of age. The State is currently providing social services to reduce this problem, as is the case of the programme called “The window of a thousand days.” The infant mortality rate is 22 per thousand live births. According to data available, in Guatemala there is one medical doctor for each 4,885 inhabitants, which means that medical services at a national level are limited; hospitals can provide an estimated 0.6 beds for every 1,000 inhabitants.

Guatemala is a country that, although having a fairly stable macroeconomic growth rate (of about 4% per year) and the largest economy in Central America, is also one of the countries with the highest poverty and income inequality rates in the continent. Poverty affects more than half of the population (56.19%) while 15.5% is affected by extreme poverty. Poverty affects rural and indigenous peoples principally, with 74% in poverty and 24.3 in extreme poverty. A large number of Guatemalan citizens have decided to emigrate to the United States to overcome their economic hardships. According to the National Commission of Guatemalan Migrants (CONAMIGUA), in 2008 there were close to 1.5 million Guatemalans living in the United States, which represents 12% of the country’s population. This situation has also converted remittances into an important component of the country’s economy. According to CONAMIGUA, in 2008 remittances totalled US\$4,314,730,000.

The signing of the peace accords between the State of Guatemala and the National Revolutionary Unity of Guatemala (URNG)²⁰ in 1996 brought to a close a chapter in the country’s history marked by an armed struggle that lasted for 36 years; during these years thousands of people lost their lives.²¹ Eighteen years after this ceasefire which opened up political participation for many sectors in society, the Accords still present challenges to Guatemala society as a whole.

¹⁷ See Ficha Estadística de Guatemala. Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica (BCIE). Available at <http://www.bcie.org/uploaded/content/article/1285334126.pdf>

¹⁸ Anuario Estadístico de la Educación 2013. Ministerio de Educación.

¹⁹ Ibid, BCIE.

²⁰ However, as pointed out by Edelberto Torres-Rivas “all the agreements were debated and a consensus reached by the key actors of Guatemalan society.” In: “Guatemala, desarrollo y democracia y los acuerdos de paz”. *Encuentros*, Revista Centroamericana de Ciencias Sociales.

²¹ According to official data from the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, it is estimated that “in very rough terms there were more than 160,000 executions and 40,000 disappeared people. *Guatemala Memoria del Silencio*, CEH, p. 73, 1999.

Today, new forms of expression of unresolved social issues are evident all across the country. Especially prevalent are situations of socio-environmental conflicts, principally around mega-construction projects (open pit mining, hydroelectric dams, and large-scale one-crop agriculture).

Socio-environmental conflicts are found in most all of the country but they are concentrated in the western departments with high percentages of indigenous peoples, such as Huehuetenango, San Marcos and Quiché. Other departments in other parts of the country and with a more diverse ethnic make-up also confront conflictive situations of a socio-environmental character, especially centred on access to land - such is the case of Jalapa, which has a historic dispute over communal lands - and the expansion of single-crop agriculture (mostly involving African palm) as in the case of the department of Petén. According to data of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, in April 2014 there were 57 licenses for exploration and 32 for extraction of metallic ores.²² On the other hand, a mapping undertaken by the office of the Advocate for Human Rights (PDH) in 2012 suggested that conflictive situations resulting from these mega projects were affecting 13 departments in the country, of which a high proportion were largely of indigenous peoples and located in the western region. Other studies show that of the 101 municipalities with permits for mineral extraction, 78% reported some sort of conflict.²³

With regards to the phenomena of violence and insecurity, mention should be made of the various studies that place the country among the most violent in Latin America and the world, a position shared with two other countries of the so-called “Northern Triangle”: El Salvador and Honduras. This characterization of Guatemala as a violent country is based on the homicide rates registered during the last years, one of the most reliable indicators of violence in the country. For example, the Global Homicide Report for 2013²⁴ estimates the homicide rate in the country at 39.9 per 100,000 inhabitants. Other studies²⁵ have estimated that the homicide rate has dropped between 2009 and 2014 from 46.4 to 31.4.

However, the situation of violence and insecurity in Guatemala is not only characterized by homicides. Added to these, the citizenry must face criminal situations - such as assaults, kidnappings, extortions, organized crime and drug trafficking - as well as other forms of violence against women and trafficking and exploitation of children, among others. In sum, the situation of violence and insecurity creates a source of conflictive situations to the extent that it fosters

²² Data on mining statistics reported in: <http://www.mem.gob.gt/viceministerio-de-mineria-e-hidrocarburos-2/estadisticas-mineras/> recovered in July 2014.

²³ *La Minería en Guatemala. Realidad y desafíos frente a la democracia y el desarrollo*. Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Fiscales, 2014. p. 30.

²⁴ Oficina de Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el delito.

²⁵ See “Violencia homicida en Guatemala retrocede por quinto año consecutivo” at: <http://ca-bi.com/blackbox/?p=9753>, recovered on 02 December 2014.

discontent and social rupture as expressed in the need to take the law into one's hands, the proliferation of private police forces and unregulated security commissions as well as restrictions on free movement in certain areas. All this has an impact by promoting distrust in other members of the citizenry and respect for the institutions of the State that are responsible for tackling these problems

Finally, mention must be made of the political reforms that began in 1985 and continued after the Peace Accords which led to judicial reforms that have guaranteed a greater participation for the citizenry - for example, laws decentralizing government, development councils and the municipal code, among others. Even though the different strategies for dialogue promoted by the governments²⁶ have not permitted a true meeting of minds among the different sectors, the reforms and legal mechanisms of the Peace Accords still are an important foundation to take on the pending challenges and continue to seek answers to the social problems that will assure the full development of all Guatemalans.

4. Findings and results of the consultation process

4.1 Identification of the responses to problems: a look at the actions

In the following pages the principal problems are listed as referred to in each of the thematic core ideas defined previously in the exploration phase (conflictive socio-environmental situations, violence and insecurity, and fragility of public institutions) and the responses which, according to those who participated in the consultation phase, constitute the principal actions undertaken by the people when confronting the problems that emerged in each of them.

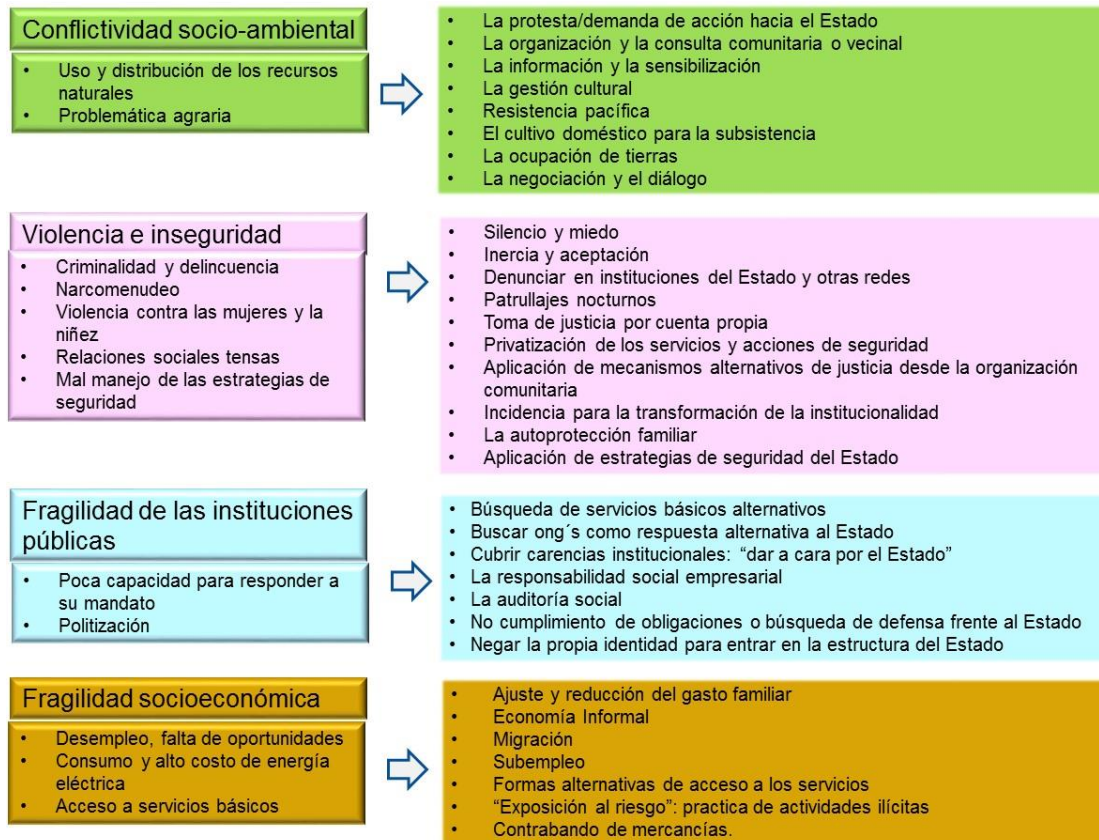
To these three core ideas must be added, in the final part of this section, another core idea that we have labelled “socioeconomic fragility.” This idea was added on due to the frequent mention in the eleven departmental consultation groups of the issues of unemployment, the economic situation and the access to basic services, and which, according the participants’ thinking, constituted a different issue to the three singled out previously.

To better place the reader, both the problems as well as the responses are organized according to the criteria mentioned more or less frequently. Thus, the

²⁶ During the government of Vinicio Cerezo (1986-1991) the strategy of “Concertación Social” was promoted; during the government of Jorge Serrano Elías (1991-1993) it was called Foro Multisectorial Social; under the government of Álvaro Arzú (1996-2000) it was called “Encuentros de Actualización”; during the period of Alfonso Portillo (2000-2004) the Mesa de Diálogo Intersectorial y Pacto Fiscal was set up; the government of Oscar Berter (2004-2008) supported the Diálogo Nacional/Plan Visión de País; under the government of Álvaro Colóm (2008-2012) there was a Sistema Nacional de Diálogo Permanente/Mesas temáticas; and currently the government of Otto Pérez Molina is supporting the Sistema Nacional de Diálogo.

first response can be considered, in the analysis, as the most important form of action taken by the population while the last will be the least frequent, according to the participants in the consultation phase. The following table summarizes the manner in which actions are taken in the face of problems as grouped under the thematic core ideas.

Ilustración No. 2 Las problemáticas y las respuestas



In the following paragraphs, the problems described under each of the thematic core ideas discussed in the groups are summarized, with reference to the actors involved in actions and the places where they took place most frequently.

4.1.1 Socio-environmental conflictive situations

For the purposes of this project, socio-environmental conflictive situations are understood as the set of conflict which, over time, have intensified as a result of the dispute by interested parties for access, distribution and use of natural resources (water, land, plantings) that individuals, communities, and societies need to be able to live fully. Along those lines, the principal problems identified during the consultation phase were:

Use and distribution of natural resources: the construction of mega projects and hydroelectric dams. This problem is centred primarily in the development of mining projects and hydroelectric dams. It has acquired greater dimensions of a conflictive nature in departments with a majority of indigenous population such as Huehuetenango (the municipality of Barillas and the case of the hydroelectric dam of Santa Cruz), San Marcos (San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa and the Marlin mine), Quiché (Ixcán and the hydroelectric dams at Xalalá and Chajul and HidroXacbal) and Alta Verapaz (where the cases of Monte Olivo and Mayaniquel were mentioned in the jurisdiction of Senahú). But this is also a worrisome concern in departments with a majority of mestizo population such as Zacapa. For example, in Teculután - a municipality in this department - a communal consultation was held in November 2013 that expressed its opposition to the construction of a hydroelectric dam on the river of the same name.²⁷ A similar experience occurred a year before, in November 2012, in the municipality of Mataquescuintla, in the department of Jalapa, also in the east of the country.²⁸

In the department of Totonicapán, especially, the implementation of the Water Law and the administration of natural springs by the State has been one of the most contentious issues for the communal authorities and the people. For the representatives of the State, this discussion has to do with the lack of exploitation of the natural resources found in the department and which, as a consequence, does not contribute to its development.

In all cases, what is perceived by the sectors consulted - people, companies, and the State - is the existence of a latent conflict that, according to the participants, creates strong divisions within the social fabric to the extent that it separates localities between those who are opposed to the projects and those who support them in exchange for some benefit (usually in the form of jobs). Also, for many it is a kind of “pressure cooker” that can explode at any moment.

Among some of the main causes of discontent are:

- Absence of consultation with the people;
- The way in which the State acts out its role in conflictive situations, frequently described (both by the private sector and communities) as inadequate and with excessive use of force;
- Degradation of the environment; and
- Pollution of rivers and the subsequent spread of illnesses.

²⁷ For more information, see: http://www.prensalibre.com/zacapa/Teculután-Zacapa-consulta-municipal-rechazan-hidroelectricas-vecinos_0_1256874390.html

²⁸ For more information, see: <http://noticias.emisorasunidas.com/noticias/nacionales/cc-avala-consulta-popular-que-vecinos-se-oponen-mineria>

Agrarian problem. The agrarian problem is centred on conflict situations caused by problems of access, property and use of land. According to the discussions in the consultation phase, this problem generates controversy due to the expansion of one-crop production, especially of African palm. At the same time, this situation exacerbates conditions due to the accumulation of land in few hands and the lack of access to land for a majority of the population involved. The search for alternatives to alleviate this problem leads to disputes over deforestation, the occupation of protected areas and the eviction of peoples, as well as disputes over sacred places.

The complexity of the agrarian situation in Guatemala has been the focus of attention of analysts and experts, who coincide in identifying it as one of the structural problems of the country.²⁹ Its concrete expressions are different in each of the regions in the country. In the department of Petén, for example, in addition to the concerns about the use of land for single-crop production, there is a difficult problem in the shape of concentration of landed property. This dynamic is characterized, as mentioned, by the appropriation of small plots of peasant land by large landowners - often linked to drug smuggling - by means of threats or evictions. This is also possible due to close friendship among the large landowners and individuals in the institutions that allow this to happen. A collateral aspect of this problem is the loss of access roads for those small landowners whose properties have been surrounded by those of the large landowners.

Without going into details about the ways that land is accumulated, the people of Zacapa also expressed their concern about the purchase of land along the strip which will be occupied by a trans-isthmian highway route across Guatemala. A case in point is that of the department of Jalapa where conflictive situations over the agrarian issue can be considered unique and historical, given that they revolve around disputes over land of the town where the municipal authorities are located currently and which belonged to the indigenous communities of Santa María Xalapán before 1873, after which the creation of the department of El Progreso overstepped the boundaries of that territory and led to the seizure and irregular sale of lands.³⁰ The conflict in this case confronts the inhabitants of the region and the rest of the people who live in the urban centre. This situation also contains a dispute of a symbolic character that reflects on the ideas and prejudices of the

²⁹ Academic writing about the agrarian situation of the country is voluminous and its analysis has been linked to the processes of change in the country. For example, the following can be consulted: Monteforte Toledo, Mario. *Guatemala: Monografía sociológica*; Schneider, Ronald M. *Communism in Guatemala 1944-1954* (Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers); Sabino, Carlos. *Guatemala, la historia silenciada (1944 - 1989)*: Tomo I, Revolución y Liberación (Fondo de Cultura Económica de Guatemala S.A. 2007); Palma Murga, Gustavo, "La problemática agraria en Guatemala hoy: algunos apuntes para su consideración". *Revista Centroamericana de Ciencias Sociales*, vol II, no. 2 (FLACSO, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, San José, Costa Rica: Costa Rica. Diciembre. 2005).

³⁰ See Dary, Claudia. (2010). *Unidos por nuestro territorio. Identidad y organización social en Santa María Xalapán*. Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala.

participants in the conflict. An example was the row over the placement of the name “Xalapán” over “Jalapa” on one of the hills that can be seen from the urban centre of the municipality just before the municipal fair in 2012.³¹ The people who participated in the consultation group understand that this situation is not due to ethnic differences but the bad distribution of the land.

In the meantime, in the department of Alta Verapaz the dynamics have been changing: in the year 2000 there was a high demand for land, then these were occupied, and currently one-crop cultivation is moving ahead. The historical agrarian problem can be summarized basically around the concentration of land in a few hands. The participants in the consultation group in Alta Verapaz considered that added on to this problem is the speculation in the price of coffee and cardamom “because the price was brought down due to the manipulations of the businessmen and at the Bank of Guatemala the price was kept low in order to make a lot of people believe that all prices were depressed but that was only to make more profits.” With regards to one-crop agriculture, reference was made principally to the fact that the expansion of African palm cultivation is causing much damage to the Northern Transverse Strip.

As a corollary to this problem is action by the State, which is singled out by the participants as disproportionate and prone to use force to settle conflicts. In Huehuetenango and Totonicapán the examples of the municipality of Barillas and the massacre of Alaska were mentioned. No less important was the repression of demonstrations in Santa María Xalapán in the municipality of Mataquescuintla, Jalapa.

Responses to the socio-environmental problem

When consulted about the concrete actions that take place in response to these problems in each of the departments, the participants discussed a variety of responses that in some cases are similar in each region but different in others. These responses are listed below in the order of frequency that they were mentioned.

- **Protest.** This refers to public demonstrations of discontent both against the use of natural resources and the lack of action by the institutions of the State, especially in its role as mediator. To the question of “What do the people do in the face of these situations?” the first answer that emerged was “protest”, an action which includes blocking roads, public demonstrations, and taking over buildings, so that their demands can be heard. These actions are accompanied by discourses that attempt to legitimize or delegitimize what the groups in conflict have done. While these actions are perceived as a valid and constitutionally backed mechanisms by the groups (communities or settlements) who protest,

³¹ See more details in: http://www.prensalibre.com/jalapa/Polemica-ubicacion-letrero_0_772722761.html

others - as was expressed openly in Jalapa - are seen as resentful people who do not want to dialogue or who “are accustomed to protest for everything” and who, in the final instance, “are manipulated by other interests.”

- **The demand that the State do something.** In addition to public demonstrations, the social actors consulted in the eleven departments coincided in demanding of the State, either directly through the institutions involved with socio-environmental issues - such as the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs or the Ministry of Mines and Energy, among others - or through dependencies such as the Departmental Development Councils, to take action in order to resolve the issues at stake. According to the opinion of the participants in the consultation groups, these demands are generally channelled through the COCODES or through the intersectoral networks and working groups, for example the “*Redes de Derivación*” (Referral Networks) of the “*Comités de Justicia*” in Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz.
- **The organization and communal or neighbourhood consultations.** One of the actions that has acquired more notoriety in the opinion of those consulted is the organization of inhabitants to demonstrate against the construction of mega projects and hydroelectric dams under the slogan of “defence of the earth”. This practice is centred around the mechanism of the “assembly” as a form of consultation within the groups but also as a space for debate and demands that the State consult them on the use of natural resources, on the basis of Convention 169 of the International Labor Office. These kinds of consultation experiences were mentioned in the departments of Quiché, Huehuetenango, and San Marcos, principally.
- **Passive resistance.** When referring to this kind of action, the participants in the sectoral groups of women and resistance organizations coincided in pointing to the inhabitants of La Puya, in San José del Golfo, as a form of opposition to the construction of mega projects in a peaceful manner, thus avoiding confrontation with the security forces that had been stationed there.
- **Domestic plantings for subsistence.** One of the ways to confront the lack of access to land for farming has been the option of planting traditional crops (corn and beans) by small farmers on very small plots or kitchen gardens. These actions were mentioned in those departments where people have a plot of land to cultivate, such as in San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz and Petén.
- **Occupation of land.** Another line of action, in departments characterized by a high concentration of land ownership such as Escuintla, Alta Verapaz and Petén, peasants and indigenous populations organize to occupy lands (squat) for housing or production. However, this action sets the ground for a circle of conflictive situations based on the formula: scarcity/occupation/eviction. Together with the occupation of lands, among other

actions by various individuals who claim to be legitimate owners is the search for regulation and judicial certainty regarding property rights, as described in the case of Santa María Xalapán, Jalapa.

- **Information and awareness building.** In the face of the difficult conditions for dialogue, the business sector involved in these conflictive situations has also developed certain kinds of actions. The actors from this sector who were consulted referred to the use of their “good neighbour policy” based on documents put together by the World Bank and which seek, basically, to bring local actors together. Among the actions included in this policy are: advertising campaigns, school creation, codes of ethics and social responsibility. These actions are carried out under the idea that on many occasions opposition to projects emerges due to lack of adequate information regarding their nature as well as the benefits that might accrue to the communities. But information and awareness building is not only carried out by the business sector but also by inter-communal and inter-departmental social organizations that divulge information through alternative media and assemblies where people make their opinions and positions known regarding the problem at hand.
- **Cultural initiatives.** In parallel, businesses also do work through ~~in~~ social (cultural) initiatives by hiring people from the communities or settlements where they plan to work in order to know the cultural conditions and the context but also to transfer information in the languages of the regions. These approaches to communities via cultural initiatives, according to the participants in the sectoral consultation with businesspeople, also include an openness towards cultural practices like Maya ceremonies in order to request permission to start operations. Not all the participants agree with this idea but, as some of the people consulted said, “This is acceptable because it has to be accepted,” and added that the permissions are usually granted.
- **Negotiation and dialogue.** One of the mechanisms mentioned to overcome differences with regards to access to natural resources, land, and basic services has been the creation of spaces for negotiation and dialogue between businesses and inhabitants. However, there is also a perception among the participants over the limited efficacy of this mechanisms and, in particular, that of the State with its National System for Dialogue, which far from being perceived as an intermediary is seen as an intensifier of conflict. Although for many of the participants this is an important form of action, there are a variety of positions involved, as expressed by one of those interviewed: “There are groups that support and other who are in opposition, but there are others who are not visible and can be pressured by the other two groups and forced to take a position that can be in favour or opposed, under the philosophy that you are with me or you against me.”

Other actors suggest that dialogue has worked, as was the case in the department of San Marcos, and it was thanks to the creation of municipal working groups that tensions have been reduced in various municipalities. In this regard, it was mentioned that these actions are not visible because there is a political interest in not accepting that conditions for reducing tensions are, in fact, being created.

A brief comparative summary of the more common responses to socio-environmental problems and the conditions that might be related to their emergence requires, in the first place, to point out that the feelings of mistrust and dissatisfaction towards the State across the board in all eleven departments produces social protest and the search for channels to demand compliance with its responsibilities.

As we have seen in the actions described, these responses do not only include those that are currently being debated concerning their legitimacy among the sectors because of the measures involved (taking over buildings, blocking roads) but also other recurrent actions such as broadcasting information and awareness-building, that find their expression in different forms and channels in all the departments, such as alternative media, inter-institutional support networks and even the Development Councils.

For other actions which are less recurrent in all the departments but very important in those where they take place, it is necessary to consider certain contextual and cultural elements that allow populations and communities in Quiché, Totonicapán, Huehuetenango, San Marcos and Alta Verapaz to create forms of organization to demand of the State that it comply with its obligations or, instead, generate the conditions that will allow them to take matters into their own hands. This communal organization owes its existence in part to common cultural elements such as language, history and the definition (physical or symbolic) of a territory but also to the relative autonomy (in good measure the result of geographic distance) with regards to the urban centres where state institutions reside.

4.1.2 Violence and insecurity

Violence is understood as all physical and psychological aggression aimed the lives and the properties of people. Included is criminality, which is any act of transgression of the law in detriment of people's lives and property through both violent and nonviolent means. In turn, insecurity is conceived as the feeling of fear produced by the perception of the threat of falling victim to a violent or criminal act and of the incapacity of public institutions to provide a response in the face of this problem.

Within this frame, criminality and delinquency turn out to be the greatest concerns of the people. To that must be added, although in less intensity, situations such

as drug peddling and violence against women and children. But it is worth noting that, in general terms, there exists a perception of tense social relations - that have the potential to be resolved violently - among the citizenry.

Criminality and delinquency. This problem involves acts of extortion, theft, assaults, death threats and, to a lesser extent, kidnappings. Official data are imprecise both in terms of causes as well as frequency in each region. Although this problem is extant all across the country, it tends to affect with greater intensity those regions with larger urban populations and those with greater ethnic diversity, such as Guatemala, Zacapa, Jalapa, Izabal, and Escuintla.

In these departments, theft, extortions, and homicides are more recurrent. In Jalapa this situations is evident in the constant theft of motorcycles. In Zacapa, on the other hand, there is greater concern especially about murders and extortions. It is noteworthy that other situations are considered as part of the phenomenon of violence, such as “shops set up by people who come from over there,” that is, from the western part of the country. The explanation for this perception, as discussed, can be found along two lines of reasoning. The first is the causal relationship between businesses and violence that, according to some, moves extortionists to act when they see more money in circulation and to follow the shopkeepers who have it. The second points to the suspicion among the townspeople that the abundance of merchandise and money in the shops cannot be explained other than the result of illicit activities.

In the meantime, in the department of Izabal the problem of criminality is centred in urban areas in the municipalities such as Los Amates, Morales and Puerto Barrios, where homicidal violence and armed assaults are prevalent, but at the same time people perceive this situation as involving only those “who are into something” and, particularly, local networks of drug trafficking. An interesting fact is that this type of violence affects and is principally associated with young men.

In the department of Quiché, when referring to criminal acts such as death threats and kidnappings, the participants in the consultation group attributed them to rival political groupings who utilize fear and violence to intimidate their opponents. These, as was mentioned, involve groups of organized neighbours and inhabitants that have different political views, mutual jealousies, and boundary disputes of small properties although their conflicts can sometimes spread over the whole municipality. But the greatest concern regarding delinquency is extortions to businesses. This concern is heightened by the perception of the incapacity of the National Civilian Police and their possible participation in criminal acts (either through negligence or taking bribes).

Drug peddling. Drug trafficking was not a topic that was discussed openly unless the researcher present asked specifically about it. However, the issue was catalogued as one of insecurity for young people around schools. Even though there exists a widely-held perception, as expressed by those consulted, that in Zacapa

and other departments in the eastern part of the country like Chiquimula and Jutiapa a lot of people are engaged in drug trafficking, the situation that concerns them is not the presence of drug traffickers who are not a threat “if one does not get involved with them” and are even considered benefactors of the population. Instead, their concern is drug peddling and low-end consumption by “young people who have no parental guidance”.

In general, for those consulted the problem with drug trafficking is perceived as an external issue with no repercussions among the population, as long as people do not get involved in this activity and allow other individuals and groups to do so, such as the case of Huehuetenango which is described as a “transit point.” In the final analysis, and in a low voice, the presence of people involved in drug trafficking is recognized as beneficial because of their support for local activities or to “scare off” those delinquents who act on their own. A different perception was held in Escuintla, where the participants pointed to drug trafficking as an alternative source of income by “fishing” loads of drugs that are tossed into the sea.

Violence against women and children. After the concern about common delinquency, people are worried about violence against women, a concern which was expressed recurrently by persons consulted in the 11 departments. Even though it is recognized as a situation that affects the lives of women specifically, in the minds of people it is usually associated with domestic violence (which is different with regard to the place where it is committed) and with violence towards children, especially. As it happens, these issues were frequently dealt with at the same time, including sexual violence, early pregnancies, early marriage for girls, sexual abuse, and child trafficking.

One of the first opinions in this respect is that these forms of violence take place within the private space of the family and reflect various causes such as machismo, patriarchy, and a lack of gender equality. But also mentioned were the lack of resources and conditions so that women might generate their own wealth. However, in opinion of those commenting, in most cases this problem is silenced and its resolution left within the sphere of the family or the couple.

With regards to early pregnancies and marriages, the participants in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Quiché and Jalapa associated these with communal practices where they are perceived as normal.

Regarding the trafficking and exploitation of girls, boys, and adolescents, the participants in Alta Verapaz said that “there are many judges who are abusers or implicated in people trafficking, which can be a worrisome conflict when one is trying to exercise some control because there are other kinds of control that do not allow for forward movement in this type of situation, either because of an abuse of power or some political control.” In geographical terms, the problem in Alta Verapaz is located in the regions of the Northern Transversal Strip (*Franja*

Transversal del Norte, FTN) and the municipalities of the Polochic (Senahú, Tucurú, Tamahú, La Tinta and Panzós).

Meanwhile, in border departments like Huehuetenango and Petén, people trafficking and exploitation are also associated with Central American migratory movements, which affect women who are in transit through their territories.

Tense social relations. This aspect has been set apart because it was mentioned recurrently in various of the departments consulted. Basically, it refers to situations of everyday relationships that affect the citizenry and which are interpreted by many as situations of insecurity as they are perceived as threats to tranquillity, such as the establishment of bars and the noise they produce.

This situation was identified in the departments of Escuintla, Quiché, Alta Verapaz (in municipalities like Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and Cahabón) and Jalapa. In this last department, reference was made to alcoholism as a serious situation which is reflected in the admittance of between 60 and 70 people every month to the rehabilitation centres in that department, according to statistics of the local office of the National Institute of Statistics.

In this same region a lack of caution and little observance of traffic regulations has been singled out as one of the main causes of traffic accidents, especially those involving motorcycles or motor-taxis (the so-called “tuctucs”). This situation was also pointed out by the consultation group in Guatemala city, where traffic is perceived as one of the environments where more violent attitudes and behaviours are produced such as going through red lights, not respecting the pedestrian ways, excessive use of the horn, and fights between drivers.

In final instance, these forms of relationship produce everyday stress that ends up being reproduced at all levels of social life and “creates a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape.”

Impact of jails on the perception of insecurity. Among the conditions of insecurity, the participants from two departments highlighted the perception of danger and threats in the vicinity of jails. These were the cases of Escuintla with its Canada Penal Farm and of the department of Jalapa and the Preventive Jail for Men in its jurisdiction.

With regards to the first, concern was expressed about the relatives of those in prison who tend to camp out in the surroundings provoking, according to those who mentioned it, insecurity and violence. In Jalapa, mention should be made of the

fact that in April 2014, 240 inmates rioted in protest of the transfer of a group of gang members³² and that in July of the same year three prisoners escaped.³³

Mismanagement of security strategies. The situation of violence that people live in and perceive was attributed also to a mismanagement of security strategies, which ends up being a source of conflictive situations. This negative opinion refers especially to the police force.

In Escuintla, in addition to the problems mentioned, the incompetence of the National Civilian Police (PNC) was pointed out, both because of its links to criminal organizations as well as the few numbers of police officers, in addition to the ineffectiveness of the office of the public prosecutor.

A similar perception was expressed among the participants from the department of Guatemala where state actors are said to be involved in crime, as well as their poor response capacity and the corruption that takes place within public institutions, especially the PNC, which regardless of the implementation of diverse security programmes is still perceived as ineffective and hardly trustworthy (for example the plan “Cuéntaselo a Waldemar”).

The poor management of security strategies not only impinges on its low efficiency but also in its overall operations; participants frequently contrasted the excessive use of force by the police when confronting public demonstrations (for example, the case of the Minera San Rafael mining company and the inhabitants of La Puya, where large numbers of police officers have been assigned) while the efforts put into controlling common crime are minimal.

A final aspect of the situation was mentioned by the consultation group of Alta Verapaz, where in its opinion there is an excessive use of violence by the State in support of mechanisms by its institutions that discriminate and exclude, a tendency that is expressed in the lack of response to public demands such as security and the rule of law.

Responses in the face of violence and insecurity

- **Silence and fear.** In the face of the situation of violence and insecurity, frequent mention was made of the fact that people remain silent and prefer not to say what is happening (even if it is happening to them, as in the case of extortions) for fear of reprisals and a lack of credibility in the efficacy of the police and the system of justice. These attitudes or forms of action were

³² See more details in: http://www.prensalibre.com/departamental/Motin-disturbios-carcel-Jalapa-presos-reos-pnc-antidisturbios-presos_0_1118888208.html

³³ See more details in: http://www.prensalibre.com/jalapa/tres-reos-se_fugan-carcel-Jalapa_0_1166883525.html

singled out by the participants from the departments of Guatemala, Escuintla, Zacapa and Izabal.

- **Inertia and acceptance.** Since it is perceived as a problem that cannot be resolved by complaints or public demonstrations of dissatisfaction, as is the case of socio-environmental conflicts or the fragility of state institutions, there is a sense of inertia that is expressed in statements like “we must struggle up to where it’s possible,” “there is nothing to be done, just wait until it’s our turn,” or “all that is left for us is to pray.” Perhaps the most dramatic example of this situation was presented in the meeting in Escuintla where mention was made of families in the municipality of Palín who have organized to raise money that at a given moment is demanded from one of them as an extortion payment.
- **Filing complaints before the institutions of the State.** Even though little trust is placed in it, the act of complaining continues to be one of the principal responses by the people, according to the consultation groups. Complaining is more frequent in departments with a greater presence of public institutions that have gained a modicum of recognition, as are the cases of Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz where the public prosecutor has specialized offices such as the Attorneys for Women and their Model for Comprehensive Services (MAI in Spanish). In those departments where these offices have just been opened, as in the case of Quiché, as reported by a representative of the public prosecutor, the level and “the culture” of filing a complaint is just beginning to increase.
- **Night patrolling.** The organization of neighbours to do prevention work takes the shape of night patrols. For many of those consulted, this practice has been effective to scare off those who might engage in criminal acts. However, there are also reservations about specifying their functions (many of these neighbourhood organizations are endorsed by the National Civilian Police and the Ministry of Government) because abuses have been committed. One of the abuses mentioned is charging money from those people who do not participate directly in night patrol groups for “protection services”. According to those who criticize this practice, charging money privatizes a community effort and undermines the initial intention of exercising justice. In Huehuetenango, for example, the joint effort among neighbours ended up in the hiring of a private vehicle to do the nightly rounds. In Totonicapán, the nightly rounds are only carried out in times of local fairs; here an “interesting” practice takes place, according to those reporting, which is that people who are detained by the members of the rounds are held without informing the authorities. Hiding them in this way is in response to the concern that “the human rights people or the police” will take over the cases and set them free. Hiding those detained from the

police means that they will be tried under communal practices which are not specified. In summary, night rounds, even though they are perceived with mistrust, are considered in general as the only viable alternative for neighbourhoods and communities to protect themselves from threats.

- **Taking justice into one's own hand.** This action refers to extreme measures such as lynching and “social cleansing.” Little was said about “social cleansing” but what little was said points to a positive attitude in the sense that it does away with the problem of “contamination”. Lynching is considered a necessary response in view of the lack of credibility of the system of justice and its ineffectiveness. And as participants said, its origin is indignation, as lynching can be done against those who are singled out or under suspicion of having committed criminal acts as well as against those who act incorrectly or not at all. Thus, for example, in Alta Verapaz mention was made of “Judges who leave much to be desired with regards to their attitudes and the way in which they carry out their work. At present there are many judges who are irresponsible and abuse their authority.” In Senahú, where a judge was lynched, the following comment provides context: “The inhabitants were punished; however, the responsible party was the judicial branch because the judge’s attitude went unchecked: he was drunk, abusive, he didn’t do his duty, etc. But this situation was not looked into. The people of Senahú requested on three occasions that the judge be transferred but due to political influences the people’s petition was not addressed.” In other municipalities like Zacualpa and Cunén, in the department of Quiché, the violent and massive mobilization of the people resulted in the expulsion of policemen and judges. Despite comments in various departments to the effect that lynching has declined or does not exist, this practice is recurrent in many of them, such as happened in Totonicapán where just a few days after it was said that lynching is a thing of the past two women were lynched in the municipality of San Cristóbal Totonicapán and some weeks later two men were beaten in the main town.
- **Privatization of security services and activities.** When security is not provided by the State or by organized community groups, the option is to contract private security. This situation was most evident in the consultation in the department of Guatemala, where examples were mentioned such as closing off housing developments, the installation of security cameras, the purchase of firearms, and the hiring of police officers. But this is not something exclusive of the capital. In other departments such as Huehuetenango and Zacapa mention was also made of the increased use of private security services, the purchase of weapons, and alarm systems for businesses and vehicles.

- **Alternative justice mechanisms employed by community organizations.** This information refers basically to the exercise of Mayan law with emphasis on the mediation role of indigenous and ancestral authorities as applied to the resolution of problems such as domestic violence, violence against women, and disputes over communal and personal boundaries. Special mention should be made of the closing of liquor stores (in Ixcán, Quiché; Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz) after communal decisions taken in assembly and put into practice by those who are charged with leading the community organization. Various controversies surround this practice. One has to do with unclear punishments under Maya law and lynching, which are often considered to be the same thing. Another has to do with clarification of the role of the different forms of leadership and delegated authority that exist in many communities where members of COCODES and their commissions, indigenous and ancestral authorities, sheriffs and assistant mayors all coexist. On the other hand, the role of indigenous authorities as mediators, especially in cases of violence towards women, has produced friction with official legislation which does not allow for reconciliation in those criminal cases as listed in the Law against Femicide and other forms of violence against women. This has also prompted discussions with organizations of Maya women and feminists regarding forms of retribution and/or reparation in cases such as rape. For example, in the group from Alta Verapaz mention was made of cases where some communal authorities resolve the problem by having the aggressor marry the victim, as the case might warrant. In other cases there have been contradictions with official legislation due to the kinds of sanctions or sentences as practiced in Maya law when not accepted as just by those who are judged and, as a consequence, seek out the intervention of the official legal system. In summary, the application of the mechanisms enshrined in Maya law, as discussed briefly in the consultation groups, must be seen under the light of the legality and legitimacy both of communal and local authorities as well as those of the State.
- **Exerting influence to transform institutions.** According to the results of the consultation, influence must be exerted especially around the problem of violence against women, both at communal and intersectoral levels. Such is the case of women's organizations and other intersectoral expressions. Local and national women's organizations have played a relevant role in furthering and promoting measures which contribute to the improvement of conditions for women, as well as demands for the reform of current legislation in support of their rights. An example of this is the establishment of the Centres for the Comprehensive Care for Women (CAIMU in Spanish) and support for women who are seeking redress as victims of violence. Another of the expressions of influence and lobbying is the participation of

organizations and sectors of the Networks for Referral of Care for Victims which was called for and organized by the public prosecutor's office in all the departments of the country and by the Executive Committees for Justice (bodies belonging to civil society) in the departments of Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango. In some regions like Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz, San Marcos, Izabal and Totonicapán the activities of the Advocate for Indigenous Women (DEMI in Spanish) have also acquired relevance. According to the women consulted in Guatemala City there have been many lobbying and outreach activities which have led to an "opening" of the system, although they believe that these actions are "patches" (stopgap measures) that are still only marginal with regards to the main problems.

- **Self-protecting families.** At a more primary level (individuals and nuclear families), actions are aimed at seeking out protection for family members by means of a change of personal habits: taking precautions, instructing children as to the latest they can stay out. These actions were pointed out by the consultations groups in Guatemala, Jalapa, and Alta Verapaz.
- **Security strategies applied by the State.** Actions by the State were also mentioned in the field of security, but limited basically to patrolling, special operations and surveillance, as well as prevention programmes organized by local police offices of the Unit for Communal Prevention of Violence (UPCV) of the Ministry of Government. Up to a point, the State is also considered, through its institutions, as the right actor to call for and legitimize the communal organization to address the issue of public security.

In summary, when faced with the situation of violence and insecurity, there is an observed tendency among the participants from the eleven departments and the sectoral groups to consider that a first response to this situation lies in the private sphere and the individual's choice, in which passivity wins out as expressed in silence, inertia, and acceptance. At a more collective level, responses include the use of patrols and night watches, which in the minds of many of those consulted are closely linked historically to the Civil Self-Defence Patrols (PAC); as one participant put it, "the only thing they have done is changing their name."

The practice of surveillance has been a point that has been debated, especially as practiced in indigenous communities where it intersects with the traditional customs, as in the cases of Quiché, Totonicapán, Huehuetenango, and Alta Verapaz. It has been no less of a problem in other departments like Escuintla, Jalapa, and Zacapa, where it is associated with taking the law into one's own hands and, in extreme form, with social cleansing.

Finally, the prevalence of more specific actions was identified in the department of Guatemala and in urban centres, such as hiring private security services and exerting influence and political lobbying, given that many of the actors who promote these actions are themselves close to the services and the institutions

with which they interact, in contrast to the social organization of communities in other parts of the country.

4.1.3 Fragility of public institutions

As employed during the consultations, the fragility of public institutions is understood as a condition of low development of the technical, administrative, and/or financial capacities of the institutions of the State to carry out their legal mandate under which they were created and thereby respond to the citizenry's demands.

During the consultation groups the problems derived from a lack of capacity were addressed. However, also discussed was the limited capacity to resist the influence of factors which move the institutions in directions that favour private and personal objectives above and beyond those that benefit the public, such as corruption and patronage. Under this focus, the problems associated with fragility of the State follow along two paths:

- 1) The lack of capacity to respond adequately to the prescribed mandate; and
- 2) The lack of capacity to resist corruption and patronage.

It should be pointed out that this is a division for analytical purposes since in practice the citizenry is basically concerned about the defective operation of the institutions and, in fact, most concerns were expressed, during the consultation, about the second aspect than about the first, as we shall see.

Limited capacity to respond adequately in fulfilment of its mandate. This problem is related basically to four factors: the first is a perception of absence and/or little effectiveness of the institutions of the State ; the second is the discredit of the state bureaucracy for a number of reasons; the third refers to the absence of an administrative and civil service career; and fourthly, a lack of awareness of the functions of the State's offices.

Regarding the limited capacity of the institutions to respond to the demands of the population, in the 11 departments those consulted underlined those institutions that are charged with the security and justice systems such as the PNC, the public prosecutor's office and the courts. This perception is based on three elements: a limited geographical coverage, excessive bureaucratic paperwork when following up on cases, and finally little capacity to resolve those cases brought to its attention.

In second place, the health system was singled out because its role was considered unsatisfactory due to the scarcity of medicines and specialized personnel to treat illnesses, which in many cases only gets worse due to the negligence of the doctors

and nurses charged with treatment. In the department of Alta Verapaz those consulted added that the situation is getting worse because “many times the way people are treated is full of ideas and behaviours that are discriminatory towards indigenous populations.”

Other departments such as Petén, Huehuetenango and San Marcos present the same difficulties. In San Marcos, one of those interviewed associated the problem with a lack of economic resources in the following terms: “why go to the doctor if the only thing they give you is the prescription.” In Petén, the problem not only refers to the health system but to its historic abandonment by the State of Guatemala.

In addition to the limited effectiveness in the provision of basic services such as education (outdated and irrelevant), health (access, pertinence, coverage) and security, reference was also made to other deficiencies. In Petén, for example, there has been a low capacity in the services of the Secretariat of Nutritional Security (SESAN) in addressing the situation of malnourishment. In Totonicapán a problem of insufficient funding was pointed out, as well as the way the monies have been spent. Similar opinions were registered in the sectoral group of young people, according to whom 80% of funds are spent on administrative costs. As one of the young people said: “There we see how the State continues to keep us sidelined, without recognizing the importance we deserve.”

These circumstances have led the population to express its mistrust and discredit towards the State and, as a consequence, they prefer to seek out their own and alternative means to resolve those issues that should be addressed by the State, such as security and health, as was mentioned.

On the other hand, the fragile situation of public institutions can be explained by the absence of a professional administrative career and of a strong civil service that will guarantee the continuity of the programmes and services provided by the institutions, which are frequently affected every four years by the change of government.

In the final instance, it was also recognized that there is a lack of awareness among the people about the specific functions that each government office is responsible for. Again, the principal example mentioned in the security and justice system was the PNC, that receives low grades as representative of the entire system.

But this lack of awareness is also associated with the limited interaction with the people in the communities that inhibits people who do not speak Spanish or who are not sufficiently literate to understand the role that institutions play, together with laws that are not geared to the linguistic requirements of groups and communities.

Lack of capacity to resist corruption and patronage: “the problem is politicization”. Among all the participants in the consultation groups in the 11 departments there was coincidence in pointing out that one of the main problems of the State is “politicization”. Politicization is understood to mean the intervention of political party interests within the structure of the State and the municipalities. Its clearest manifestations are patronage, influence peddling, the scarce investment in communities that are electorally adverse, abuse, concentration of power, and the lack of representation.

In Huehuetenango the politicization within the state institutions is associated with access to employment in the institutions in a discretionary manner and in response to family and friendship relations, which generates, as was mentioned, chaos and informality in the public sector when positions in government are occupied by people who are not duly prepared for a civil service job.

A similar situation was described in Zacapa, where politicization was compounded by influence peddling in the assignment of jobs within institutions exclusively for those close to the incumbent authorities. This was described as a form of government which acts only under political interests and where there is a notorious use of the “cocodes”³⁴, as institutions that only rubber-stamp decisions taken elsewhere. Mention is also made of the dependence of government jobs on drug trafficking or the infiltration of the powers that be which, in the final count, determine who gets a job and what decisions must be taken and, closely linked to this, the negligence of the security and justice offices to go after these powers.

In Alta Verapaz, the problems of politicization and patronage are evident, in the first place, in the absence of investment in certain communities. This is a form of punishment via limited investment that is decided by the local authorities of communities that did not vote for them. During the consultation in this department, the following was heard: “In Cobán there are communities which are condemned to not received a single cent of investment because the government’s party lost the election in these communities,” and they add that “this can result in a conflict, now it is just a latent conflict, in the next elections it can change but if the government party were to lose again, that will be a conflict that will explode, something we cannot say out loud. The same that is happening here must be happening in other municipalities at a national level.”

For the participants this situation is the result of the loss of the secret nature of the vote: “Now it is easy to know which community voted for the government’s party or for what party they voted for. That means the loss of the secret nature of the vote and instead of progressing the communities have backtracked with that

³⁴ COCODES is the acronym for Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo, which are part of the operation structure of the Sistema Nacional de Consejos de Desarrollo. However, reference to “los cocodes” frequently means specific individuals who are part of the community structure - the COCODE - at a given moment.

procedure. Both the local and/or the national government punishes the communities by not investing in projects.”

In Izabal, one of the main problems discussed was the abuse and centralization of power by the local and national authorities because, as mentioned, on many occasions they do not take into account the opinion of the wide spectrum of populations and sectors of civil society, such as the Garífuna population and women. To this they add the way in which political parties act by “coopting leaderships and cutting the strands of representation between the leaders and the groups they claim to represent.” As expressed by one of the participants who has been invited to run for office by a number of parties: “To participate as a candidate it is necessary to consult with the people. It cannot be decided just like that, believing what the parties say about one as a representative. First one must consult, first one has to talk because I know my people.”

This need to consult with the population on a number of different issues is one of the aspects most singled out as a weakness or lack of will by the State, according to the opinion of those consulted. According to this, little attention is paid by government officials towards conflicts, as well a lack of openness for dialogue, which according to those consulted demonstrates a lack of political will to overcome complicated situations.

Finally, in addition to corruption and patronage, in departments such as Guatemala, Escuintla, Jalapa, Zacapa and Petén, participants said that the use of government offices for personal benefit is associated with criminal groups that place conditions on the activities of the institutions, especially in the case of the application of the law. As said: “People are afraid of the courts because afterwards these same courts “point a finger” at the people who lodge a complaint.”

Response by the population in the face of the fragility of public institutions

With regards to this issue, an imbalance was observed between the number of problems referred to and the number of answers that surfaced, which is different from the two previous issues. However, during the more extended interviews and discussions other actions were identified which, to some extent, compensate for the shortcoming mentioned. The constant in this sense (as was also pointed out in the two previous cases) was the mistrust in the capacity of the State to respond to the demands but also the fear of reprisals by those who are singled out for not carrying out their responsibilities within the state’s bureaucracy. In the final count, it is believed that there have been changes although with limited capacity, as was expressed by a participant in one of the working groups: “The State listens to the demands but does not act.”

The following responses were proposed to address these issues:

- **Search for alternative basic services.** To cope with a lack of basic services - such as health - the population looks to a variety of means: the convergence centres,³⁵ the use of private clinics, the purchase of medicines and traditional medicines. Within communities, one significant alternative involves the local healers and midwives, who are held in high esteem within the communities not only as providers of services but as agents of social cohesion, as was mentioned: “Who better than they, who have seen all of us here being born.” The kitchen gardens, in addition to providing for the family’s economy - as was pointed out in the actions to cope with socio-environmental conflictive situations - also provide medicinal herbs. The same person who mentioned that the only things that people get at health clinics and hospitals are prescription then asked “What is one to do with this? Better one goes off and boils some herbs.”
- **Finding an NGO as an alternative to the State.** Among those actors that were identified a playing a mediating and substitute function in lieu of those of the State, diverse NGOs stood out as providers of health care, education, and promotion of economic development and tourism, among others. For many of those consulted, the NGOs also serve as something like “a shoulder to cry on” where the citizenry can go and demand that the State comply with its responsibilities. However, this role is not always well perceived because according to others the NGOs have also fallen into error by attempting to substitute for the State, with the additional problem of not having the institutional strength nor the economic resources to sustain their interventions. In departments such as San Marcos and Jalapa this was an issue discussed to the effect that there is a need to define and deepen the role of organized civil society and the interventions by NGOs.
- **Make up for institutional shortcomings: “Stick up for the State”.** On a number of occasions, those public servants interviewed expressed contradictory sentiments about the perception of an inefficient State in contrast to the positive opinions held within its institutions about its role. In San Marcos, for example, during one of the consultation groups an intense debate took place concerning the status of the State of Guatemala as a failed state, to which one of the participants from the public sector reacted strongly. Her argument was that if the State was said to be a failure, this assumed that its institutions had also failed, which she disagreed with. In Quiché, the representative of an office that served women recognized that the State has limits (both in terms of legal mandates and budgets) that did not allow her and her colleagues to proceed

³⁵ Although mention should be made that these are part of the outreach model for coverage of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance. For more information see: “Modelo de Extensión de Cobertura en el primer nivel de atención”, MSPAS, 2007.

according to their notion of justice, hence on many occasions she did “things” that her institution would not allow but which she considered necessary for supporting women victims of violence, such as providing economic support or assisting the community to undertake investigations.

In another avenue for action, a public servant underlined the fact that the very same public institutions sometimes receive assistance from individuals, groups and even from the employees themselves to enable them to function. This assistance is of little volume and involves office materials and equipment necessary for their operation. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the State receives financial and technical support on a large scale from the business sector or international cooperation agencies (such as donations of computer equipment) that is channelled via the head offices and does not always reach its local destination.

What lies at the base of all this is a self-assessment of the actions that public servants carry out so that State apparatus can function, as was expressed by one of them who emphatically added after an interview: “Now that you turned that thing off [the voice recorder], I can tell you that what we really feel is frustration. Because the State does wrong things and one must keep a straight face for them.”

- **Business social responsibility.** Business social responsibility is carried out by companies that have projects in the regions where they are present, for which they use their own funds. In ways similar to those of NGOs, they also intervene in issues of health, education, and the promotion of economic development at micro-social levels such as entrepreneurship and family businesses. An example of this Fundazúcar which has developed training programmes for teachers and improvements in the quality of education, especially in the departments of the southern coast of the country. In Totonicapán the commercial sector also supports education directly (without going through the Ministry of Education and its departmental supervisory offices, which it considers bureaucratic) with training and diploma programmes for teachers in the department. For those who support these programmes (hydroelectric concerns and mining companies, among others) there is concern that these actions might lessen the State’s responsibility, whom they consider primarily responsible for promoting education, health, and development at the community level. Regardless, as they mentioned, they are the only ones - in the communities where they are present - that provide these services.
- **Social audits.** Although not evidenced directly, social audits (without being called thus) are one of the actions that sectoral groups - where women once again have a leadership role - carry out to demand that the State and its institutions comply with their mandate. In San Marcos, for example, a group

of women who are members of the Network of Indigenous Women's Organizations for Reproductive Health (REDMISAR) volunteer to oversee the operations of schools and health clinics. Given the relevance of this work, we can transcribe part of the dialogue:

How do you do it?

We go from place to place, hospitals, health clinics, schools. We visit and evaluate the conditions: that the beds be alright, that there is medicine, that there be no discrimination.

And what is that good for?

To go and talk to the ministers, to the legislators, to the mayors, and sometimes we have gotten good results.

Departments like Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango have similar spaces where persons from civil society and representatives of the various institutions of the State get together called Executive Committees for Justice.³⁶ As expressed by members of these committees in both departments, they are currently engaged in providing support for the justice system by making observations about its functioning and, on occasions, providing support through specific tasks they are assigned. Among their contributions the point to the influence they exerted to set up and constantly improve the Models for Comprehensive Attention (MAI) of the judicial branch, in addition to setting up training programmes, especially on issues related to violence against women and other forms of violence.

- **Noncompliance of obligations or search for defence before the State.** Noncompliance of obligations was referred to as a reaction produced by dissatisfaction with - and corruption within - the State and boils down to not paying taxes or reporting to the office of the Superintendent of Fiscal Administration (SAT). This reaction can acquire more elaborate forms of defence against SAT³⁷ by instructing people in ways to avoid paying taxes or corresponding fines.
- **Negation of one's own identity in order to get a job in the State.** This aspect was mentioned especially in regions where there are clear cultural differences, especially when compared to the dominant cultural composition of the state apparatus; such is the case in Izabal where the Garífuna population is in a minority. For those who mentioned this topic, it's a matter of leaving one's cultural values aside, such as the language and clothing of one's group, in order to be considered for a post or not to be

³⁶ These bodies were set up with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2011 and bring together sectors of civil society and institutions of the security and justice systems, such as the prosecutor's office and the judicial branch.

³⁷ The name of the department and the sector from which this opinion originates are omitted as specifically requested by the speaker.

discriminated against in other spaces of public life such as schools or offices that process people's requests.

More elaborate responses in the face of the fragility of public institutions is more complicated here than in the two previous ones. In this last, as we saw, a large part of the concerns have to do with very structure of the State and the role of political parties.

In departments with a high percentage of peasant population and higher levels of rural residence - such as Alta Verapaz and San Marcos - the response in the face of little presence of the State was the creation of alternative mechanisms. Also frequent was reference to the presence of ONGs and projects sponsored by private businesses, especially in those territories where mining and hydroelectric projects are being developed such as Quiché, Huehuetenango, and Alta Verapaz. At a lesser degree, these projects can also be found in departments like Jalapa, Zacapa and Izabal, where people express resentment at the excessive attention provided to indigenous populations in detriment of others in the eastern part of the country.

In the case of social audits, as identified, this responds to the creation of intersectoral networks without regards to any special characteristic of each department, but there do exist common concerns as in the case of the Referral Networks and the Executive Committees for Justice and their involvement in issues of violence against women and access to justice, as in the cases of the departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz.

Among the actions undertaken mention can be made of one in particular that evidences the invisibility of the group which expressed it: this is the denial of their identity to have access to the State's structure as told by Garífuna women of the department of Izabal. As they themselves expressed it, this people has also been invisible historically given the indigenous/ladino dichotomy that is dominant in Guatemalan social imagination.

4.1.4 Socioeconomic fragility

Unemployment, lack of opportunities and poverty. This problem is associated with a lack of opportunities, understood not only as limited access to a job but also to education, which is understood as a necessary condition for social ascent and an improvement in the economic situation of families. The poverty in which many families live was interpreted recurrently in all the departments consulted as a structural matter caused by low educational levels which, in turn, constitute an obstacle for access to real opportunities to land a good job. Along these lines, a woman who was interviewed in the department of Izabal expressed categorically that "here there is no work for us", and pointed out that in addition to the few job openings they have difficulty complying with all the requirements for obtaining a job.

Other aspects that shape this problem refer to seasonal conditions, as is the case in the department of Escuintla where at the end of the sugar cane harvest income drops for a large part of the population; gender conditions expressed in the disparity between men and women in access to jobs (sectoral women's group); lack of specific policies and regulations that guarantee access to employment (sectoral youth group); or jobs in the public sector occupied by people who are not qualified that owe their post to some connection with the authorities.

Consumption and high cost of electric energy. The cost of electric energy is one of the major concerns of populations in all the departments due to its high cost, that might reach up to Q400 or Q500 a month. This situation is worsened by irregularities in the service as well as its low quality, according to informants. In rural areas the problem has to do with a lack of access to the service.

But the situation of access to electric energy becomes more sensitive when it is contrasted with the construction of hydroelectric dams among those populations that are most affected. According to a participant from Alta Verapaz, "the strategic platform with regards to the generation, transport and distribution is a time bomb with hidden characteristics." These "hidden" characteristics refer to the play of special political and economic interests that according to his perception could be behind the building of these hydroelectric dams and the lack of services to the surrounding communities. Another approach considered this problem as an example of exclusion due to the ethnic condition of the people (discrimination), especially in a department with a majority of indigenous rural population, as in the case of Alta Verapaz. And the participant added: "The very fact that the needs of this population are not being addressed is a violation of human rights."

For the participants of the business sector, the problem related to the construction of hydroelectric dams is due to a lack of information because by law companies cannot generate, transport and distribute energy at the same time. For the business sector, the problem is in the distribution of energy, which does not affect them directly. On the other hand, the lack of information also affects the perception of populations that do not receive the benefits that the projects supposedly will generate. This situation is explained not only as a matter of perception but also one of the use of the economic benefits that accrue to local authorities and municipalities.

Access to basic services and infrastructure. In addition to the big structural problems and their macro-social impact, for the populations in the departments consulted there are also sensitive concerns surrounding the access to basic services and transportation infrastructure.

With regards to the first, the issue of access to drinking water is of the greatest relevance in various departments. In the city of Guatemala, for example, the water supply is scarce in various zones and neighbourhoods, especially those located in peripheral or semi-urban areas, such as Mixco and Villanueva. But in

other departments also, such as Petén, Zacapa, Jalapa and Escuintla, mention was made of the poor conditions of access to water where even if there are pipes the quality of water is not suitable for drinking and human consumption. Special mention was made of Puerto Barrios, the municipal seat of the department of Izabal, which every year must face the rainy season with a sewage system that is not adequate and leads to flooding; this situation worsens the problem of access to potable water and health conditions in general.

Some of those consulted say that the problem is due to the lack of political will of the local authorities to solve the problem but they also recognize that municipalities on occasion do not have sufficient budgetary resources to handle these matters.

Other aspects have also been mentioned along these lines, such as the disposal of garbage, drainages and, in general, poor urban planning. Concerning garbage disposal, for example, in the city of Guatemala reference was made to the difficulties of finding places to dispose of garbage. Currently, the landfill for Zone 3 has exceeded its capacity and only the municipality of Amatitlán is accepting garbage that is produced in the capital. In the meantime, other neighbouring municipalities do not allow garbage produced outside of their jurisdiction.

Finally, various departments expressed concern about the poor state of roads and highways that do not allow for easy communication with urban centres, the access to necessary services such as health and education, and in the final instance, to commercial exchanges. Again, the most dramatic case is that of Puerto Barrios, Izabal, where the poor conditions of roads leading to the port of Santo Tomás was pointed out, even though these are important commercial routes.

Responses in the face of socioeconomic fragility

In the face of poverty and the lack of jobs that guarantee a stable income, the citizenry of Guatemala has developed a number of responses by means of which, as frequently expressed, “they go off on an adventure of survival.”

The main responses are:

- **Adjustment and reduction of family expenditures.** The lack of possible job options has made families reconsider adaptation mechanisms such as adjustments to the family budget and a reduction of certain expenses ~~given items~~, especially in health and entertainment. These responses were mostly mentioned in the departments of Huehuetenango and Totonicapán.
- **Informal economic activities.** These are the set of mechanisms most easily accessible to confront conditions of poverty and lack of employment, among which are the sale of merchandise in the informal market and services which are not regulated by labour law. For example, in Izabal - and more

specifically among the Garífuna population - women seek income by selling coconut bread or travelling to local fairs to “braid hair” or organizing dance groups for cultural events.

- **Migration.** In all departments consulted migration was a constant response. Although the risks involved are known, migration is seen as one of the principal measures that people can take to cope with the situation, especially those who decide to travel illegally to the United States. But there is also migration from the countryside to the cities, especially to the capital in search of employment or, as mentioned before, to work in the informal sector.
- **Underemployment.** Defined as employment under conditions which do not meet certain norms³⁸, underemployment was mentioned especially as a problem for young people to the extent that they do not see how working in something like a “call centre” can allow them to advance professionally. On the other hand, in Zacapa and Jalapa mention was made of a category of young people called *ninis*, those who neither work nor study. This perception, however, was probably associated with a study recently released by an international agency.³⁹
- **Alternative forms of access to electrical energy.** This refers to alternative means of obtaining electric energy in communities which lack this service by the state or the hydroelectric companies. The very definition of this practice is being discussed currently. For example, while voices from the government (in Jalapa, San Marcos, Alta Verapaz) talk about “stealing of electricity” - which assumes a criminal action - others from civil society refer to it as “irregular use” and what is needed, therefore, is regulation, not punishment.
- **“Taking risks”: involvement in illicit activities.** For those who mentioned this line of work, these actions refer to activities that are considered illegal within the current body of law, but necessary for the subsistence of individuals or family. In Escuintla, for example, mention was made that “the option seen by many men was to buy a boat and go off to fish (drugs) at sea.” While along the border with Mexico families in the department of San

³⁸ According to the International Uniform Classification of Occupations, (CIUO, ILO, 1970) the term “underemployment” is used to define inadequate employment in relation to specific norms or alternative employment in accordance with required qualifications, for example, insufficient job openings (“visible underemployment”) or imperfect distribution of manpower resources (“invisible underemployment”). Recovered on 8 December 2014 at: http://white.lim.ilo.org/gpe/ver_definicion.php?gloCodigo=141

³⁹ The reference is probably to the report “Trabajo decente y juventud en América Latina”, by the International Labour Office (ILO). Although this report contains indicators for Guatemala, they are not disaggregated by department.

Marcos plant opium poppies on small plots and sell the product to the large drug distributors.

- **Contraband merchandise.** In those same border zones - San Marcos and Huehuetenango in the west, and Jutiapa⁴⁰ in the east - contraband is a common practice, principally in fuel.

Finally, with regards to responses and alternatives for job creation and improved economic conditions, in various departments mention was made of policies of social assistance such as “conditioned transfers” (Mi Bono Seguro). It should be mentioned here that these were considered ineffective for a number of reasons. For those from the western region, the Bono Seguro is considered a source of dependency, while for voices in the east it is conceived more as a source of conformism for those who participate in the programme.

4.2 Levels of action

Part of the analytical frame for the actions that people undertake in the face of multiple concerns and obstacles that they confront when exercising their citizen rights, considers the ways in which they might contribute to the generation of social capital and, as a consequence, to greater social cohesion. According to the conceptual framework of the project, social capital is defined as:

The internal social and cultural coherence of a society, the norms and values that determine the interactions between individuals and the institutions in which they are embedded. Social capital is the glue that maintains societies united and without which there can be no economic growth or human wellbeing.⁴¹

From this perspective, social capital can be generated along two levels: vertical and horizontal. We will define a vertical level as the articulation and exchange of capacities among groups in a society and the State, its institutions and its norms, while the horizontal level represents the relations among groups in a society and their operation in different spheres of social cohesion as the family, religious groups, civil and political organizations, commercial groupings and other forms of organization based on gender or ethnic conditions, among others.

As we have inferred, Figure 3 (below) illustrates one way of analyzing the exchanges that occur between organized groups (temporal or permanent) and other groups or with the State and its institutions. From other perspectives, these

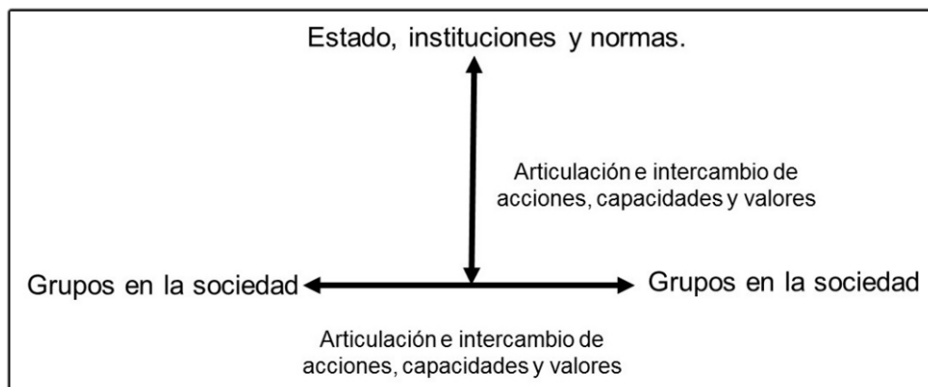
⁴⁰ This department was not part of the consultation phase; however, when discussing alternative mechanisms for facing unemployment, it was mentioned as an example of contraband of goods such as gasoline.

⁴¹ McCandless, Erin and Graeme Simpson. *Assessing Resilience for Peacebuilding*. A discussionDocument. Interpeace, 2014.

relations might not seem so evident or important; however, as evidenced during the discussions of the consultation groups and the interviews, there are a number of exchanges among the diverse actors at the moment when they execute their actions. This does not suggest that these exchanges are exempt of conflicts or opposing positions, much less of actions based on consensus or agreements.

From the perspective of social cohesion, a relevant aspect is the establishment of articulations along the vertical and horizontal levels, or their intersections, that will allow the groups and communities to generate more capacities to address and manage conflicts more cohesively. Among these articulations we can find strong linkages based on the identity of the members of a group (bonding), the creation of transverse articulations among various groups (bridging) or others which connect these groups via relations which are mediated by the institutions and the norms of the State (linking).

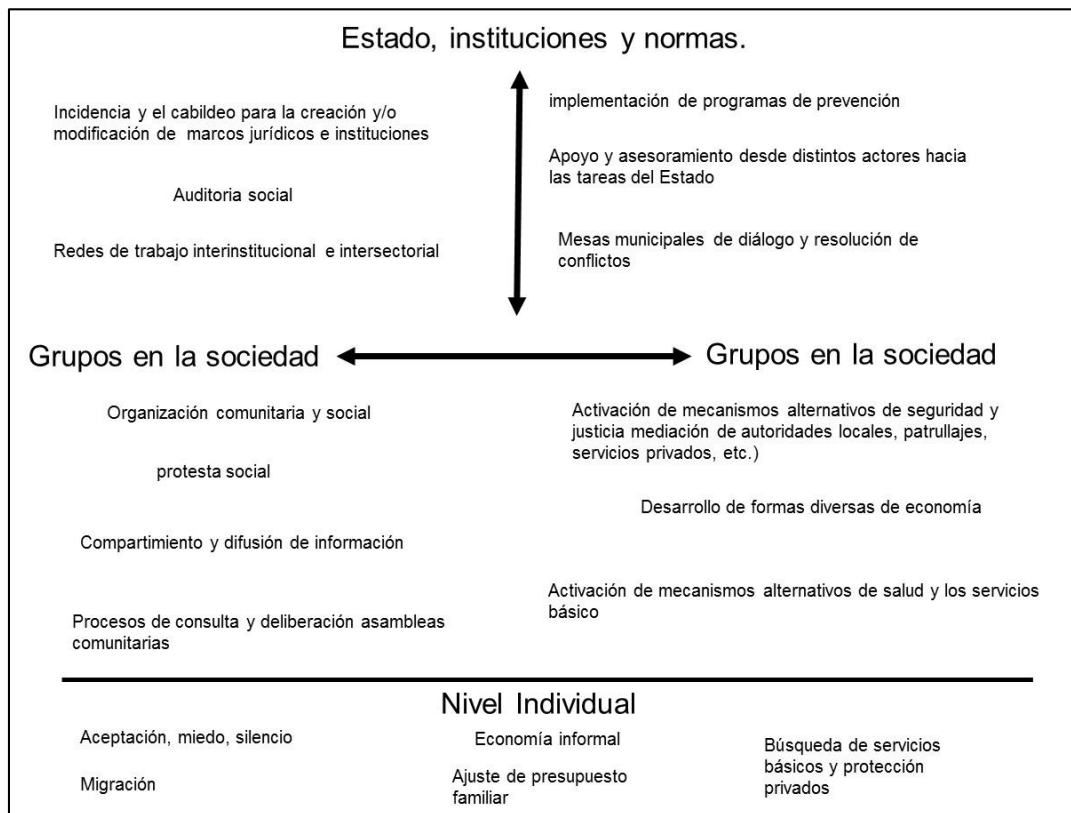
Figure 3. Levels of analysis of social actions



But the same does not happen when the actions are carried out on a more individual level, that is, they do not require the participation or the opinion of others in order to be carried out even though they might be shared by a large number of individuals in society, or at the level of the private space of primary relations, the family. In fact, for the participants in the consultation groups, individual action was identified above all to suggest little interest and a lack of citizen involvement to influence those issues of social concern or of State involvement. In the following diagram the level of individual action has now been added on which, although present in the actions referred to, is not considered a linking factor that will overcome or transform the problems which are faced.

4.2.1 Vertical level

In practical terms, the most debatable of the levels for those who carry out the actions is the vertical level given the perceptions regarding the State as a passive and inefficient body lacking political will to promote strategies and programmes. Despite these perceptions that were mentioned during the discussions of the consultation process, various actions evidence exchanges among the social groups and this body, its institutions and its norms.



- **Influence and lobbying.** Especially among women's organizations for the reform of judicial frameworks to favour the population of women. The links established here are between members of these organizations and local or national public officials, particularly in the security and judicial systems that involve offices such as the public prosecutor, the judicial branch and the National Civilian Police. The most illustrative examples are represented in the Executive Committees for Justice of Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango, as well as the network against domestic and child violence

in Quiché. In the department of Guatemala, this level of action is much greater by women's organizations that do follow up of the changes in public policy that support women. There are also youth organizations that include actions to influence and lobby the State, either to demand compliance of their rights or to provide follow up for passing the youth law. The consultation held in Guatemala was attended by diverse organizations that at present are lobbying for the passage of this law, while in Petén, Alta Verapaz and San Marcos there are youth groups that seek to influence the State's decisions by means of an interdepartmental network.

- **Interinstitutional and intersectoral action networks.** These involve various sectors of civil society with the State institutions. Again, the care for victims of violence constitutes a cohesive force as in the case of the Referral Networks promoted by the prosecutor's office and which were mentioned in departments such as San Marcos, Quiché, Huehuetenango, Zacapa, and Alta Verapaz. In departments where socio-environmental conflicts are more intense, municipal working groups have been formed to promote dialogue and conflict resolution organized by the CODEDES and COMUDES which, although not approved by all, seek to open up dialogue among the sectors involved, as in the case of the departments of Quiché and San Marcos. In the departments of Zacapa, Jalapa and Petén there are networks involving youth groups and the National Commission for Youth (CONJUVE) through the so-called "civic service", which has been promoted by the Ministry of Government. This strategy involves youth in activities of the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Defence, primarily.
- **Social audits.** The creation of interinstitutional networks and alliances has also added on the social audit component which, according to the participants in San Marcos and Huehuetenango (departments where this issue was discussed the most) is not limited to demanding accountability from state institutions but also involves support and strategies for institutional strengthening, as in the case of the Executive Committees for Justice in Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz, which act in coordination with the offices mentioned. Other expressions of these links is the activity of RERMISAR of San Marcos, that seeks to influence authorities for the improvement of health and education systems in the department.
- **Support and advice by different actors for the State.** According to the participants, this refers to direct interventions or support for public offices in issues of health, education and local economic development, carried out by local NGOs or the private sector. Despite the fact that these actions are funded with their own resources, NGOs and companies must establish some level of contact with the State in order to receive authorization to proceed with the projects. In Totonicapán, for example, the commercial sector has developed programmes to update teachers, as do the sugar interests in the south of the country.

- **Implementation of prevention programmes by the State based on the model of citizen security.** This is one of the issues that brings together most strongly the articulation of efforts on the vertical level: security. These programmes are supported locally by the Ministry of Government through the Units for the Prevention of Communal Violence (UPCV). Despite the fact that night patrols are not part of these programmes, as mentioned by various representatives of these offices in the departments of Totonicapán, Zacapa, Jalapa and Guatemala, they continue to be one of the main spheres of action of communities in collaboration with the officers of the PNC or under its supervision.

4.2.2 Horizontal level

In addition to the linkages and exchanges listed between the people and the State, various actions were identified that associate work, capacities and sharing norms and values among groups and social organizations. In the opinion of many of those consulted, this form of horizontal articulation - without the presence of the State - tends to be favoured due to the mistrust and disinterest in establishing mechanisms of collaboration with public institutions. Among the reasons pointed out by the participants, the “politicization of the State” stands out, understood as taking undue advantage of the State’s offices and resources for private gain.

At the horizontal level of action, communal and social organization stand out the principal form of articulation of groups and sectors in society, according to the groups consulted. Organization is conceived as the best way to support really consistent changes, while at the same time it allows actors to propose answers to the problems identified, such as social protest, sharing and distributing information, consulting and discussing matters of interest, activation of alternative mechanisms of justice and basic services not covered by the State and, in the final instance, alternative forms of economic activity.

On a sectoral plane, organization is understood as a form of articulation in order to achieve certain objectives, including political ones, as was mentioned in the women’s sectoral consultation group. When referring to communal organizations, the participants referred to the need to establish not only closer organizational links but also those that privilege identity, in addition to the observance of conventional norms (explicit or otherwise) and values such as the respect for communal authorities, not seeking personal gain or showing off, and respect for the decisions of the assembly (the highest body for discussions and decisions), among others.

Following are a list of actions that emerge from this form of articulation on the horizontal level:

- **Social protest.** In general, the participants of the groups consulted in all the departments coincided that protest is one the primary form of social articulation (organized or spontaneous) by which they express their positions, dissatisfactions and demands before the State. (This is not a relation at the vertical level because the State is not part of the articulation but the object of the action.) In addition to its public expressions, social protest, as discussed in the consultation phase, suggests a level of capacity to summon and organize that allows individuals and collectives to act in terms of a common objective. In San Marcos, for example, mention was made of communities that block highways in order to prevent the entry of the police and, in that manner, protect their only forms of subsistence (poppy plantings or contraband). In Totonicapán, while the consultation group was in session, there was a demonstration that blocked the Cuatro Caminos intersection - on one of the main routes for access to various departments in the west of the country - to protest the passage of a law in the Congress of the Republic.
- **Socialization and distribution of information.** The importance of precise and updated information “of what is happening” was one of the most recurrent observations regarding social and communal organization. The various sectors considered the broadcasting of information as one of the principal strategies to obtain information about projects and activities as well as to make known what others are doing with regards to the same problems. In the case of the business sector, and especially those that are involved in hydroelectric or mining projects, mention was made of the importance of generating information in the communities where they seek to establish their projects. This is done through advertising and information campaigns in schools and communities. Members of indigenous organizations that were consulted mentioned alternative means for broadcasting information supported by virtual networks; however, according to them the main avenue for information and communication of their activities is the communal assembly. In the discussion group for the youth sector, one of the groups determined that dissemination of information through their social networks helps to maintain a degree of knowledge about what is happening in the country (even the importance of this is not fully recognized). On the other hand, retransmission of information is not only effective for political action but also for other spheres of social life, as was expressed by a woman poet in the department of Huehuetenango, for whom the networks have been important to create literary networks with other people in the country.
- **Consultation and discussion processes.** Among actions at the horizontal level, special mention must be made of indigenous communities and groups whose forms of organization are closely tied to a shared culture, such as history, territory and common languages. Among others, they have developed the practice of communal assemblies to deal with problems that affect the community as well as those of a more everyday nature, such as

the construction of mega projects or mediation in matters such as domestic violence. However, these assemblies to discuss issues of social concern are not exclusive of indigenous populations, as was pointed out in the cases of Jalapa and Zacapa where assemblies were held regarding the construction of hydroelectric dams in those departments. Nonetheless, their organization responded to a specific issue for a limited time, in contrast to the indigenous assemblies which are permanent and are even involved in the regulation of social life.

- **The activation of alternative mechanisms of justice and other dimensions such as health and basic services.** On issues of justice, as has been mentioned, the presence of indigenous and ancestral authorities is important, especially among indigenous populations (Quiché, Alta Verapaz, Totonicapán, San Marcos and Huehuetenango). The activation of alternative mechanisms of justice includes patrols and night watches in both indigenous as well as mestizo communities (where it is the only expression of alternative mechanisms organized by the community). In both cases, their existence is troublesome. To this troublesome form of action must be added taking justice into one's own hands, with lynching as its most extreme form. On the other hand, in all departments the people consulted coincided in identifying midwives as the principal providers of alternative health services as well as agents of social integration among groups and communities. They are seen as bearers of knowledge, experience, and legitimacy within these groups but, despite this, it was said that they have not received due recognition for their role, neither from the State nor from many people in their own communities. To the midwives must be added the healers (Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quiché) and religious leaders of different persuasions (Zacapa, Alta Verapaz, San Marcos) who, at a given moment, might contribute to achieve higher levels of social articulation.
- **Development of diverse forms of economic activity.** In the final count, the organization of groups and communities seek to collectively cope with economic difficulties of a subsistence nature which affect them through mechanisms like the occupation of land (Petén, Alta Verapaz, Jalapa), access to electric energy (Huehuetenango, Quiché), poppy plantings or contraband (San Marcos), group migrations within the country in search of activities to obtain income (Izabal, Alta Verapaz), and informal markets (all departments). In all these cases, social and communal articulation plays a role of protecting activities undertaken in family circles or local communities.
- **Articulation of efforts to contract private security services.** The participants agreed that organization in urban areas has to do with specific objectives, such as insecurity. The responses, in addition to aiming to reduce risks and threats, also tend to regulate the life styles of the inhabitants of residential areas and condominiums, as for example the

establishment of rules of coexistence and the installation of systems to control comings and goings from those places. These measures referred mostly to the department of Guatemala.

4.2.3 Individual responses

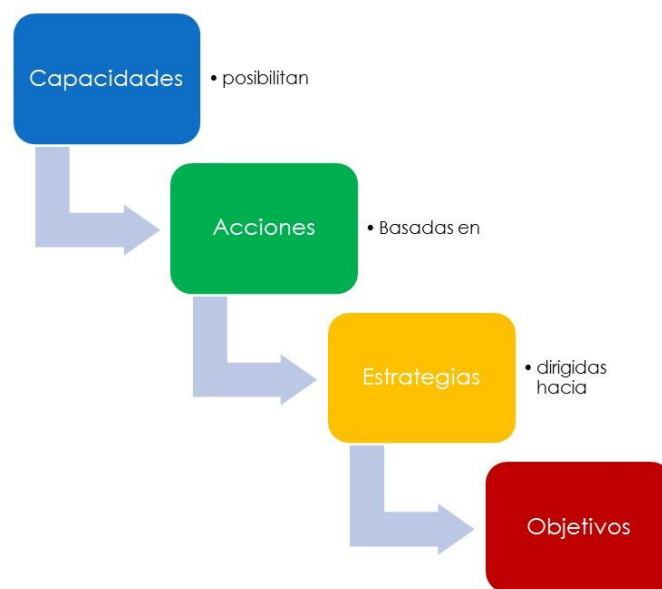
During the consultation phase reference was made to actions undertaken at an individual level, which was understood by the participants to mean a lack of articulation with others to overcome problems. These, then, are responses at a private level that seek to solve specific problems in the short term and which do not transcend to the public sphere. These responses, as was observed, have to do with problems of subsistence and security.

- **Subsistence.** In the case of conditions of basic subsistence, for example, we find the informal economic sector (identified by participants from all 11 departments) and migration to the United States. Adjustments and reductions of family expenditures, on the one hand, and kitchen gardens, on the other, were responses found mainly in the departments of Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Alta Verapaz and Petén where, it was said, people have access to a plot of land (patio) to plant for self-consumption. In the final count, the most complicated of subsistence activities is poppy planting (San Marcos) and contraband of forbidden substances (Izabal, Petén, Escuintla, and San Marcos). Other problems such as the lack of access to health services also provokes individual responses as in the case of private health care, as was mentioned by the participants in the departments of Guatemala, Alta Verapaz, Totonicapán, Zacapa, Jalapa, and Huehuetenango. In the rural areas of these and the rest of the departments that were consulted, alternative medicines have been sought: healers, domestic plantings of herbs.
- **Security.** In contrast to those issues involving socio-environmental conflicts and the fragility of public institutions, most comments about violence and insecurity that were heard at the beginning of the discussions referred to silence and fear, followed by inertia (let things happen) and acceptance of the situation (waiting for something to happen). According to the participants, within families the tendency has not been to face the threats but to seek out protection mechanisms such as staying out hours and driving habits. These actions referred primarily to the department of Guatemala. Individual actions, especially in the urban centres of the departments of Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Zacapa, Jalapa, Izabal and Escuintla took the form of self-protection measures in the form of alarms and security systems and defence of possessions (homes, cars) and of individuals (weapons).

No less important, although less frequent, are individual actions in the face of the fragility of public institutions. Reference can be made to the refusal to pay taxes as a form of expressing discontent with corruption in public institutions; this situation was mentioned in Guatemala, Totonicapán, and Huehuetenango.

4.3 Capacities

As described in the analytical strategy for this document, the underlying logic sought to demonstrate how responses (actions) taken and referred to by the participants in the consultation groups are possible thanks to existing capacities which have been gathering strength over the years and which support the implementation of those practices. According to this logic of analysis, in aiming at a specific objective, the groups or individuals have strategies in mind that generated specific actions, based on their capacities to see them through, as illustrated in the following chart:



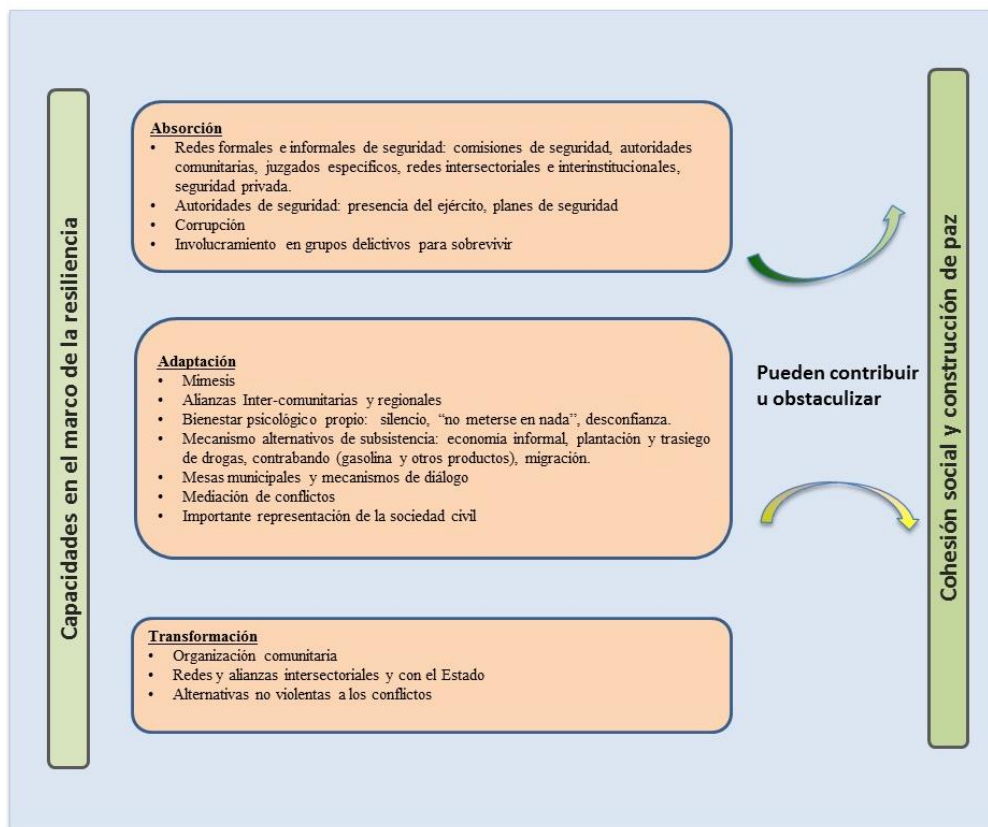
By following the logic described in the graph, we will now refer to the actions described previously and relate them to the capacities which, according to those consulted, allow them to proceed and allow the people to confront the various problems that they mentioned.

In the first place, mention should be made that above and beyond at which level of articulation (vertical or horizontal) the action took place, for those consulted it was also relevant to consider what the actions aimed to achieve (objectives); in other words, where they were headed as a society and what that tells us about the way that responses to problems are devised. Of particular interest in the discussions was the sustainability over time of the actions (their effectiveness and

how long they would last). Within the analytical framework of resilience, capacities can be envisioned analytically under three forms of handling or confronting conflictive situations: the capacity for **absorption**, the capacity for **adaptation**, and the capacity for **transformation**.

These capacities develop ideally within a dynamic process where the capacity for absorption denotes the persistence of the problems and the stability of the actions; the capacity for adaptation suggests greater flexibility to change the models for action and increase adjustments to problem situations, until the capacity for transformation is reached, which means a change in the situation. The following graph offers a summary of these capacities and actions that are taken in the face of problems.

Capacities for the management of conflictivity and conflicts



During the discussions the idea was always present that the actions so described could tend both to absorb the problems as well as achieve a better adaptation, or even transform the existing conditions, according to how each actor interprets his own actions.

Many of these actions and capacities are currently being debated, both with regards to their effectiveness as to their legitimacy. That is why in the preceding

graph it is stated that they could both contributed to producing more social cohesion and peace building as well as their detriment, depending on the positions and the ways in which those involved choose to act. Thus, for example, while for some of those consulted the creation of security networks (absorption), both formal and informal, has served to maintain order and security in the communities (as reflected in the 11 departments consulted, with no exceptions), there were frequent discussion also surrounding the danger that these groups pose if they violate human rights and abuse their authority.

In the following pages, each of these capacities will be analyzed, keeping in mind that their application with regards to addressing conflictive situations is one of the basic themes that will have to be discussed in the later stages of this process.

4.3.1 Absorption

Absorption refers basically to the persistence of difficult situations in the lives of people who by employing this capacity are able to moderate the impact of such problems.

For the participants in the consultation process, especially in the 11 departments, absorption was linked primarily to addressing the problem of violence and insecurity, where actions, albeit considered important, have not led necessarily to a reduction of the problems. A recurrent example of this situation was the complaint of crimes such as theft, extortion or violence towards women. In the case of the first two, the participants accepted that improvement in the form of more openness in the judicial system had taken place, thus allowing for more processing of complaints, in contrast to the little effectiveness of the Police, the prosecutor's office, and the judicial branch to resolve satisfactorily the complaints brought before them. On the contrary, for those who expressed opinions, a complaint is a "double-edged sword" in the sense that if the problem is not resolved they might suffer the consequences of a possible act of vengeance by those who had been singled out.

With regards to the situation of violence against women, the sectoral consultation group in the city of Guatemala also discussed the effectiveness of the complaint mechanism, since the system still does not have the operational and financial capacity to respond to the demands for action. Along this same line, the women thought that the problem of Guatemala was that it was "over-institutionalized", that is, that it has a large number of laws and institutions that address the problems but conditions and political will do not exist to make them operational.

Within the same discussion framework on the situation of violence and security strategies, the participants of departments like Huehuetenango, Quiché, Alta Verapaz and Totonicapán, principally, commented on the lack of clarity with regards to the participation of the population in those strategies. The groups involved in community watches were referred to frequently as collective practices

that at some moment could get out of hand, or they themselves creating conditions of insecurity among the population.

In another avenue of analysis, the participants considered that certain individual responses in the face of socio-economic fragility, for example, constitute a form of absorption, as in the case of involvement in illicit activities such as poppy plantings and smuggling.

4.3.2 Adaptation

As has been mentioned, the differences between one or another capacity can be subtle or variable according to the interpretation of those who execute them. In analytical terms, the difference between the capacity for absorption and that of adaptation is of a temporary character. In this last, the actions acquire a higher level of acceptance among the people and turn into capacities which allow them to adapt to difficult situations and shape them in such a manner that they respond to their living conditions.

The discussions about these capacities in the consultation groups resulted in the identification of adaptive capacities both individual and collective. In the case of the first, as mentioned previously, the populations have developed mimetic capacities, that is, the fusion or copy of existing models that allow them to confront problems through survival mechanisms such as the search for alternative means of subsistence as well as access to basic services. In Escuintla, for example, the example was mentioned of “men who go to sea to fish”, with reference to the search for drug shipments that means money income. In departments like Huehuetenango and Zacapa, the mimetic capacity is also expressed through silence with respect to the activities of groups of drug traffickers; the most eloquent expression in this regard came from one of the participants from the first department who said “as long as you don’t meddle with them, there is no problem”. In fact, outside of the consultation groups and in a low voice, it is admitted that these groups have become “social protectors” or “benefactors” of the communities.

This mimetic capacity is also expressed in the form of silence, in the acceptance of violence and even in the involvement with criminal groups to avoid reprisals, with the ultimate objective being survival, a situation which was discussed especially in those departments where crime statistics are higher in contrast to the rest of the country, such as Escuintla, Guatemala, and Izabal.

Subsistence was another of the mechanisms identified as an adaptive capacity since it seeks alternative means of acquiring income. This mechanism also includes actions such as migration, informal economic activities, and smuggling.

The capacity to adapt was also analyzed at a collective level. According to the discussions, it is the social and communal organization that allows individuals and

groups to come together in articulated ways to undertake actions such as protests, demands for rights and services from the State, lobbying and exercising influencing in politics. In the consultation groups held in the departments with a majority of indigenous peoples, such as Totonicapán, Quiché, Huehuetenango, and Alta Verapaz, it was said that this capacity for articulation is possible thanks to the intervention of the identity component which, according to the participants in the groups in those departments, reinforces the organization by bringing together social and cultural factors such as the use of the same language, a shared geographical location, and shared values, among others.

In summary, populations and social sectors are able to confront adverse situations by their capacity to organize and by having an important presence of organizations of civil society that can summon, involve people and coordinate actions that influence outcomes. This capacity to organize, on the one hand, is geared to demand compliance of the State's responsibilities and, on the other, to develop alternatives when the State is unable to comply with them, such as the provision of alternative judicial and health mechanisms and establishment of social norms, among others.

From another perspective, one of the participants of the sectoral group of political parties explained that this organizational capacity of sectors and communities is relevant although it must be kept in mind whether the creation of norms and laws by the Congress of the Republic should address the specific requirements of the groups that demand their passage (for example, specific laws for women or indigenous peoples) or whether it should address legislation of a general nature that, according to its criteria, should be of interest to the wider population.

Finally, it is necessary to underline the importance that education was assigned in various departments where the consultation was held. According to those who addressed this issue, a higher level of educational achievement allows people to face more successfully difficult situations and problems in addition to reducing, in their opinion, the propensity for violent action to resolve them. However, for the participants in some of the departments the educational aspect is still significantly lacking. In Totonicapán, for example, mention was made of the lack of interest by the State in providing educational services which is manifest in the lack of public investment. Despite this, people look to pay for their own studies and thereby assure themselves a better standard of living. In Quiché, this same situation was mentioned but with a difference in that many (principally) young people do not have the basic wherewithal that will allow them to access education services.

On the other hand, an alternative for organized sectors and groups in the face of a lack of education opportunities, especially with regards to awareness of rights, has been the implementation of information and training strategies. Through exchange of information and training in certain topics, people have not only become aware of their rights but also find motivation for action. Through awareness-raising in the form of education and training, sectors and groups have

engaged in action, as is well evidenced in the case of women, whose actions in support of their rights and against violence have been especially relevant in all the departments that were consulted.

4.3.3 Transformation

Transformation, within the analytical framework that we have used, assumes a more complex dimension of actions and capacities that would tend towards the creation of new forms and structures layered on the previous system. As observed in the description of the actions, many of the concerns of the citizenry regarding the fragility of the institutions of the State are not centred only on their lack of capacity but also on the structure and direction of the State in general. Issues such as corruption, patronage, the use of financial resources or the so-called “politicization” were identified by the consultation groups as obstacles for the transformation of the living standards of the population.

According to the perspective of peace building within the analytical framework of resilience, when the State represents an actor or a party in a conflict - as was mentioned in departments such as Totonicapán, San Marcos and Huehuetenango - it is necessary that the State and its institutions experiment a transformation in its structure. In this sense, under this perspective, the capacities for absorption or adaptation can help communities face difficult situations, but in the longer run the conditions of resilience require a transformation that includes communities and institutions that might help address in a more sustained manner any forthcoming challenges.

A tendency was observed in the consultation groups to consider that there were not sufficient elements to conceive of significant or transformative changes under the current conditions; despite this, the importance of organization in communities, networks and alliances was underlined as a means that has produced good results in furthering social transformations.

To advance along this line, those consulted identified lack of capacities or obstacles that must be overcome to generate new conditions for conflict resolution and management, among them:

- Absence of open and legitimate dialogue
- Lack of political will
- Radicalized ideological positions
- Intervention by political interests
- A priori criminalization of collective actions, and

- Little clarity in the plans supported by the State, as well as a lack of resources assigned to that effect.

4.3.4 Resistance

During the consultation process, and especially in the departmental consultations, the groups recurrently identified resistance as one of the principal capacities of the Guatemalan population. However, this resistance is not expressed in the same manner nor does it have the same significance for all individuals and populations.

On the one hand, resistance was referred to as a capacity to withstand (silently), to be patient and hope for change (“we have nothing left to do but pray”) or dig in (“to hold on as long as possible”). In this case, resistance was meant as an action of withstanding and holding on which is accomplished individually or in isolation, as was said. Under this perspective, the word “resist” was used as a synonym of “withstand.”

The scenarios where this form of resistance was employed are primarily those characterized by situations of conflict or socio-economic fragility. Examples of this form of resistance are digging in as mentioned in Guatemala city and personal and family self-protection measures involving changes in conduct and life styles in the departments of Escuintla and San Marcos.

But in another sense, resistance gains relevance not only as a reaction to difficult situations but also as a means of creating identity, social ties, and shared visions of the world, as expressed by some of the slogans employed by some of the sectors consulted: “resist to live, resist to move forward”, in the words of a community leader at a sectoral meeting with organizations involved in the defence of land.

In these active expressions, resistance is seen as a collective strategy in support of actions like social protest and public demonstrations in defence of territories and natural resources.

When conceived as a way of life by those who underlined the capacity for collective resistance, the subsequent actions are not necessarily aimed at confronting the State or other sectors, but also as political actions to influence and lobby the State or to generate alternative mechanisms for survival. On a more anthropological level, for its actors resistance implies construction and reconstruction of identities and recovery of memories, histories and shared experiences that inspire their actions.

Therefore, as was mentioned, resistance is interpreted as a form of forward-looking action but which in some cases is not fully defined as, for example, “resist until when?” or “resist for what?” In any case, for many the very act of resistance is a form of transformation. However, for analytical purposes and subsequent study, an intermediate step has been contemplated prior to transformation so that

its expressions can be addressed in more depth by the various groups and sectors in Guatemala.

4.4 Meanings

The consultation process was understood from the beginning as a space of intersectoral dialogue in which diverse actors and sectors could express their opinions and perspectives about shared issues, in this case the problems that Guatemala's population faces and the responses they employ to confront them.

From the start of the process, at each of the meetings the importance of dialogue was underlined in order to become acquainted with these multiple perspectives and not to seek a consensus or a unified answer. In this context it was necessary for each one of the sectors and actors involved to understand fully what their actions - or those they mentioned - meant for them since by knowing their meaning it would be possible to discover the underlying arguments and justifications for them.

This approach was based on the assumption that the meanings of the actions refer to aspects of a moral and ethical nature that reflect the existence of different life styles and world visions⁴², and that in conflictive situations they acquire greater relevance when contrasting different points of view on acts which for some might seem trivial but for others can even be offensive.

As was evidenced in the consultations, the interpretations of "what does it mean" to do this or that when addressing these issues followed different routes:

- 1) In the first place, when reacting to the questions about why they did those things with regards to the problems they had identified, some groups tended to consider the answer in terms of the affective impact of their actions, that is, how the actions affected them emotionally.
- 2) A second way of understanding this issue was to project the "why" into the future; that is, according to the participants, what should be the objective of their actions or the changes they hoped would happen.
- 3) Finally, another way of understanding the meaning of their actions was to relate them to the reasons and motives (personal and political) that inspired them to act.

Each of these forms of understanding the meanings of actions are listed below as they were addressed in the consultation groups.

Meanings of the actions undertaken

⁴² Velho, Gilberto. *Projeto e metamorfosis. Antropologia das sociedades complexas*. J. Zahar Editor, Brasil, 2013.

One first idea about the significance of the actions undertaken was in the sphere of affective results after the action had taken place. Among the most illustrative examples referred to by the participants are the denunciations of illicit acts before the authorities or, in other cases, social organization to demand compliance by the authorities of their responsibilities such as the provision of basic services.

In these cases, to speak of “what it means” to denounce or demand, two types of sentiments were identified in the face of lack of compliance by the authorities: impotence and frustration.

On the one hand, the feeling of not being able to do anything in the face of problems (especially in the case of violence), but on the other, the feeling of frustration in the face of the realization that regardless of the efforts made there was no change in the conditions that prompted the action. In both cases, as was said, these sentiments generate a lack of interest among the people to participate in any initiative from the State and a general condition of anomie, as expressed by one of the participants: “Why speak if it only causes problems.”

Meanings as aspirations

Along another line, meanings were also understood and addressed from the level of aspirations (hopes), that is, by projecting the wishes for a future as a result of actions undertaken today. These aspirations point to three aspects:

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

Within the consultation group of youth sector in the city of Guatemala, the discussion went into some depth about the perception of the future of the country. The main criticism, according to the young participants, was levelled at the contrast between what was expected of them and the resources assigned so that such expectations could become a reality. As expressed by one of them: “When one becomes aware that we are the future of Guatemala, the idea is inspiring. The sad part is when the possibility arrives and the system does not allow it. And one ends up with a feeling of not achieving anything.”

Among the participants of this consultation group the impression is that the discourse about youth being the future of the country only serves as a mechanism

to excuse from responsibility those who currently hold the present of the country in their hands.

In Alta Verapaz, during a collective interview with a group of young people, they expressed no interest in political or state activities, even though it is one of the biggest demands among this sector. As one of them expressed, no one wants to participate in the State, which they consider illegitimate and lacking credibility.

Meanings as bases for action

As foundations for action, meanings were considered as part of the reasons and sentiments that moved the participants to organize and carry out specific actions in the face of problems that affect their lives. Among the principal reasons mentioned:

- **Indignation.** This feeling of indignation is created in the face of contempt or lack of recognition of identity in its widest sense, that is, of who we are and what we are worth according to our social identity, as expressed by a young person: “At a reunion they gave me bad looks because of the earring; some of those there had been my teachers and they excluded me and my opinion did not register with them, but that motivated me to keep on struggling.”

But the lack of recognition was expressed in other forms, as in the case of the construction of the mega projects (San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quiché) where initial indignation is produced by the lack of interest by the State and the companies to consult previously with the communities about the projects they seek to initiate: “They arrive and they enter and don’t even ask us about it” was a constant complaint when discussing these problems.

Participants of the business sectoral group also expressed their point of view in the sense that there has been insufficient recognition of the benefits and the investment that the projects represent by those who are opposed to them.

For various of the participants in the consultation groups, indignation has surfaced as a result of a lack of attention, ill treatments, unfulfilled promises, disdain and inequality (for example, in the distribution of the budget, as was mentioned in Totonicapán) and a feeling of exclusion. In addition to this, in some places mention was made of indignation in the face of a loss of the principle of authority that, as expressed, referred to the way in which many local leaders handled the power given them and ended up negotiating and making deals with political parties and the government authorities.

In parallel with this indignation, reference was made to the rage which can emanate from these same motives, as was expressed by a social leader: “What is the source of energy? Indignation and rage, in the face of what we experience. Insatisfaction, resentment, those are things that move me.

In general, this indignation is propelled by a sentiment of injustice and, more concretely, by the perception that actions are not sufficiently valued and understood by those in the other position. An example of this situation can be found in the case of the government employee, in the department of San Marcos, who refused to accept that the State of Guatemala was a failed state because, under her logic, that assumes that both she and the other employees and officials who take pride in their work are doing a bad job.

- **Organization and overcoming adversity.** At the same time, these feelings of frustration, of impotence and indignation are also understood as motivators to overcome adversity and they end up being a self-recognition of their own capacities. “Why are some able to better overcome situations and others not?” was a question raised in the discussions of the consultation groups. The answer provided especially by women was recurrent: “It was when I began to participate.” A government employee in Alta Verapaz, for example, explained that her commitment in the struggle for women’s rights began during a training session: “There I became aware that these things happened to me and to other women.” A similar opinion was expressed by another woman in the consultation group in Guatemala city, for whom the act of narrating what has happened to each of them then becomes a political tool.

In this regard it is important to mention the experience of women of REDMISAR in San Marcos, when they refer to the importance of their action, for which there is a very pragmatic reason: “We do it because we have time”. But there are reasons also related to sentiments of overcoming adversity: “Because there is a need, because there is a lot of machismo, because we see the suffering of our children.”

- **Continuity in the history of struggle.** For various participants in the consultation process, especially in the departments of Petén, Huehuetenango and Quiché, as well as some sectoral groups in the capital, the reasons that impelled them to action were related to providing continuity to a legacy of struggle, especially for those who had relatives who were involved, one way or another, with the circumstances of the armed conflict in the country. As a result, struggle and resistance are essential motivations for the actions they undertake. During an interview in Petén, for example, a young woman of twenty expressed that her interest in participating and in “struggling”, according to her own words,

comes from a family history of parents and other relatives who were active during the period of the conflict. Others in the groups of women and organizations in defence of land said that this struggle had not lost its relevance after the signing of the Peace Accords but that it had been replaced under new forms and ways of action.

- **Faith.** Given its motivational nature, faith was referred to as a niche of strength that allows for recovery and forward movement. In the women's sectoral group and in an interview with women in San Marcos, faith was also considered to a source of inspiration and a political tool. As a source of inspiration, women find in religious practice (Catholic or Protestant) the motives that lead them to demand better living conditions for themselves and their families, even though the church they belong to might not necessarily partake of these actions. In other cases, as was referred to in San Marcos in the case of the pastoral movement in defence of the land and in Guatemala in the case of La Puya, some religious organizations do provide support for the political action of their congregation and, in this manner, heighten the faith of the people to carry on with their action.
- **Resistance as a way of life.** This approach to resistance was discussed principally in the women's sectoral group in the capital. In this group, resistance is conceived as action, as capacity and motivational force. As action it represents strength to confront problems and conflicts, as a model for building new political and ideological reference points and, finally, as a way of deconstructing and renewing identity. In the case of women, for example, it means leaving behind a perception as victims, to rebel against a historic condition and, as was expressed, to say "no, I don't want this for myself."
- **The defence of private property.** As mentioned primarily by the participants in the business people sectoral group, the defence and certainty of private property constitutes, in their mind, one of the pillars upon which must rest the discussion about access to land and its use for commercial or industrial purposes.

5. Priorities

From the perspective of Interpeace, one of the purposes of the PAR lies in its involvement of all actors and sectors interested in identifying issues or matters of interest, as well as defining priorities for analyzing them. During the consultation process, after a wide-ranging discussion about the problems and ways of action, the participants also held an exercise to reflect on the issues that, in their opinion, should remain for the debate in the following stages of the process.

More than a search for solutions or consensus at that moment, this exercise sought to identify the priorities that would outline possible scenarios to be addressed as thematic core ideas by the National Group and the Working Groups that will provide follow-up to the PAR process.

The priority themes described here reflect the concerns expressed by the participants in exploratory and consultation phases which, according to them, should be addressed and discussed in the working groups.

During the exploration phase, the people interviewed identified a number of themes which, in their opinion should be debated under each of the thematic core ideas:

Socio-environmental conflict:

- Community consultation prior to the construction of mega projects (mining, hydroelectric dams, and one-crop farming).
- Divergent economic model(s) of rural development.
- Lack of adequate legislation for exploitation of natural resources.
- Ideological polarization that impedes real dialogue.

Violence and insecurity

- Drug trafficking as an emergent and threatening actor for all social sectors.
- Lack of culturally pertinent strategies for security and justice.
- Voids in legislation regarding citizen participation in security.

Fragility of State institutions

- Use of the State for patronage.
- Fiscal reform and public spending.
- Financing of political parties and, consequently, reforms of the system.
- Role of the Development Councils in the development of their communities or as allies of political parties and government.
- Current legislation on the civil service and development councils.

During the consultation phase, in addition to identifying the priorities of the thematic core ideas, also discussed were the spaces where these priorities should be worked on:

On issues of socio-environmental conflicts

At the family level

- Support for self-management to generate income.
- Support for self-sufficiency in food.

At a community and social level

- Community consultations
 - Definition of responsibilities for calling into assembly and regulating procedures so that results are binding.
- Explaining interests and proposals
 - Calling for open and sincere dialogue about what each of the parties involved is seeking and what it proposes to lessen the conflict caused by the installation of hydroelectric dams and mega projects.

At a State level

- Regulation of mining activities.
 - Discussions about the benefits and difficulties of these activities.
 - Regulation of local investment and use of royalties.
 - Discussion about the model of economic development and up to what point can the parties involved be flexible.
- Mediating role of the State
 - It is necessary to reconsider conflict management and the use of force.
 - Discussion about the “criminalization” of protest.
 - Definition of “legitimate” and “illegitimate” counterparts when it comes down to discussions.

Matters of violence and insecurity

At the family level

- Prevention of violence

- Review the role of family units and schools in the prevention of violence.
- Support for campaigns to educate and provide information on specific matters such as violence against women and in the family.

At a community and social level

- Administration of justice
 - Define the role of the citizenry in the strategies for security and justice.
 - Discussion about the relationship between Maya law and government law.
 - Acceptance of indigenous authority and formal recognition by the State.

At the State level

- Strengthening of the system of security and justice.
 - A new discussion about what is meant by “security” in the minds of all sectors.
 - Improvement and professionalization of the National Civilian Police.
 - Strengthening of security institutions (PNC, prosecutor’s office, Ministry of Government).

Matters of fragility of public institutions

- Support for development of new forms of social linkages.
 - How to restart the discussion of cultural differences in the country?
 - Understand the history of the country by delving into the historic memory.
 - Strengthening of the educational system and support for local leadership.
- Mechanisms to transform mindsets within groups and communities.
 - In what manner is it possible to support social strategies and policies that do not run counter to cultural aspects but, at the same time, think about changing mindsets among groups to make these

strategies possible (for example, in matters of sex education and family planning)?

- Mechanisms to reactivate citizen participation.
 - Discussions regarding representation in civil society, levels of representation and legitimacy, and relation with the State.
 - Discussion about the Law of Development Councils and the implications of its application.
 - Consider new forms for exercising citizenship.
- Role of NGOs and international cooperation agencies.
 - Review of their role in strengthening the State, representation and intermediation with civil society.

Regarding the State

- The role of international cooperation organizations.
 - Impact through their interventions in the communities.
 - Role in mediation and/or promotion of peace.
 - Relations with the State.
- Role of the citizenry in the assessment of public policies.
 - Strengthening of norms with regards to citizen participation.
 - Support for strategies of social audit.
- Links of the citizenry with local governments.
 - Currently the perception is that there is no coordination between the population and local governments over issues like waste disposal, provision of services, water treatment, and urban planning.
 - Lack of coordination is observed between the local and central governments.
 - Contemplate groupings of municipalities as a new form of municipal management.
- System of political parties.
 - The necessary review and reform of the electoral and political parties laws.

- The role of political parties in the weakening or strengthening of the State.
- Discussion about the use of public monies and costly political campaigns.
- Design, allocation and distribution of public budgets.
 - A more intense discussion on the circumstances for the allocations in the national budget and its audit at all levels.
 - Creation of policies to fight corruption and tax evasion.
- Strengthening of administrative careers and review of the civil service law.
 - Reconsider strategies to avoid patronage and the changes in the bureaucracy with every change in government.
- The model for economic development in Guatemala.
 - Include specific issues such as: tax system, informality and precariousness in employment, access to land and the means of production, migration and its socio-economic impact, distribution of wealth.

Matters of socio-economic fragility

At a family level

- Improvement in the quality of life and economic situation of families.
 - Strategies to create jobs.
 - Policies and strategies for family planning.

At a communal and social level

- Access to new technologies.
 - A serious discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the inclusion of these technologies both for an improvement of the quality of education as well as for the conservation of cultural aspects.

Conclusions: elements for a discussion

Instead of arriving at definitive conclusions, the work undertaken up to now within the “Frameworks for Assessing Resilience in Guatemala Project” has sought to outline a landscape which allows a visualization of the diverse factors, voices and experiences that intervene and must be taken into account as part of the follow-up of the PAR by the actors and sectors involved.

In this sense, this last section proposes to summarize what has been widely described in the document, underlining challenges, dilemmas and the next steps in the consultation phase that will enable a consensus around the definition of an agenda among the sectors and actors involved.

Challenges and opportunities

- Despite the fact that from its beginning the project intended to work from the experiences of the subjects before becoming involved with concepts and definitions, the term resilience always was present to the extent that it was part of material with information that the participants received. This operational detail ended up being a matter of some relevance both with regards to the levels of participation achieved as well as the expectations that were generated during the succeeding stages. Even though the term is not usual in everyday language, among some of those consulted it caused curiosity with regards to its contribution to action, as expressed by a group of women in Izabal: “When we heard about resilience we thought it was a sort of resistance.” In another group there was curiosity expressed in the following question: “Is resilience a form of resistance or is it resistance that will make us resilient?” To consider these and other questions under theoretical conceptions which are illustrated by practical experiences constitutes one of the principal challenges for the following process.
- The issues discussed around each of the thematic core ideas demonstrate the level of concern of diverse sectors about matters that affect their life, in both public and private aspects, but also a level of clarity with regards to what “must” be done on the basis of how they understand the situation. These forms of resolution are not always harmonious among all the actors and, as a consequence, do not enjoy full legitimacy. For that reason, as was expressed among the priorities of this work, it is necessary to consider answers and capacities that are generated as points to discuss and not as finished and unmovable facts.
- Socio-environmental conflicts, as described, constitute for now the principal topic for debate at a national level. The positions expressed in the consultation groups fall into two tendencies, from rejection to support of the construction of hydroelectric dams and mining projects, which are the

main topics of discussion in this matter. The problem is complex and has many angles which range from discussions about the binding character of communal consultations, the legitimacy of local leaderships, differing conceptions about local and national economic development, and even socio-cultural aspects like identity and life styles, among others. On this matter, both experts consulted and the citizenry that participated in the process coincided in pointing out that it involves a discussion about “the economic model we want for the country.”

- With regards to the matter of violence and insecurity, concerns are not less but, as described in the actions that people take, the problem tends to be relegated to solutions more on an individual and private level, while the State is left only with responsibility for increasing security. As was mentioned in one of the consultation groups, the discussions about what is understood as “security and violence” will be one of the most important challenges for the next steps.
- Above and beyond the differing positions and opinions with regards to problems such as socio-environmental conflicts and violence, it should be mentioned that if it is possible to talk about an intersectoral meeting of minds, this is expressed in concerns about the current conditions of the structure of the State and the need to discuss the ways of transforming it in order to overcome corruption and clientelism.
- The identification of actions and capacities - existing and generated - in the face of these problems allowed for a consideration of the decisive actors in processes of social change. As could be noticed in the description of actions and capacities, frequent voices were heard from women and women’s organizations that, at the local and national levels, lobby and carry out actions to influence policy, promote alternative mechanisms for subsistence and health, organize resistance and work to integrate intersectoral and interinstitutional networks of diverse nature. Their active and representative participation in the process constitutes a challenge and an opportunity to generate new perspective and outlooks.
- The identification of actions at the vertical and horizontal levels, as were referred to during the consultation phase, reveal that - outside of the common conceptions that “nothing is being done” or that “people don’t get involved” - there do exist numerous coordinated efforts among groups and communities, as well as - although less frequent and less well assessed - with institutions of the State, such that in the next phase of the process it will be extremely important to discuss the value of these interactions and their “organization” (understood as the establishment of linkages).
- Out of all the consultation groups that met, in a good number of them it was the opinion that the exercise of talking about problems and what was done to confront them without attempting to achieve solutions or consensus then and there, offered the opportunity to say what was felt and thought,

thereby creating an authentic space for social catharsis which, according to those who expressed it, is a first step for the beginning of a dialogue. “Sometimes what we want - said a participant in Alta Verapaz - is just that people listen to us.” A similar position emerged in the business sectoral group, where one participant expressed the need that not only the same groups sit down to talk but that the opportunity be for everyone to say what she/he thinks and seeks to achieve.

- The long list of ideas with regards to the priorities to be addressed in the future allows for the identification of issues of greatest concern surrounding the socio-environmental problems and, especially, the construction of hydroelectric dams and mining projects. The regulation of these activities, the destination of royalties and popular consultations head the list of concerns. In the meantime, concern about the issues of insecurity and violence are focused on two problems: the definition of security and its provision by the State. To this must be added an interest to better understand the role which the citizenry can play. With regards to the fragility of public institutions (a topic of most concern for the majority of those consulted), it is the State which find itself at the centre of attention, specifically its administration and operation as well as the role of political parties, the distribution of the national budget and compliance with the norms that apply to it. To this was added the importance of discussing the role of civil society and of international cooperation organizations in the strengthening of the State.

Dilemmas

- The participants in the process recurrently expressed a cautious attitude towards dialogue. Although they recognize that dialogue is a means for all voices involved in a problem to express their points of view, they also recognize that the efforts made up to this day have not produced the desired results and that, in the final instance, they have responded to the interests of certain groups. In this context, the question arises: “How to set up a process for dialogue that is legitimate and that does not address the interests of one sector or of a few?”
- Together with this concern, others emerged with respect to the real possibilities for a dialogue. Such is the case of “ideological polarization” pointed out indistinctly by various actors and which assumes, according to them, little interest in abandoning or moving away from positions based on political or ideological criteria.

Next steps

As explained in the working methodology employed in this document, the process of Participatory Action Research (PAR) from the perspective of Interpeace is made up of a series of steps that seek, among other things, to engage all the actors who are interested in identifying problems and achieving a consensus about solutions and priorities as well as the ownership of the process with the objective in mind of setting its agendas, defining its topics and doing follow-up. What follows are the steps to provide continuity to the process already begun by Interpeace:

1. Visits and summons to representatives at high level of diverse organization of civil society, sectors, and State institutions related with the contents of the project.
2. This group will make up the so-called National Group, which will be responsible for coordination and follow-up of the implementation phase.
3. Completion and study of the present document to make known the results of the first phases (exploration and consultation), as well as defining the key points and the thematic agenda.
4. The definition of key points and thematic agenda, in turn, requires the summons and organization of the specific Working Groups for each one of the topics selected by the National Group, which will be charged with follow-up and coordination of the dynamics of the Working Groups.
5. Parallel to the organization of the Working Groups, a meeting of a larger group of participants from diverse sectors and institutions will be held, including those who participated in the consultation phase so that they may know and validate the work of the National Group; this large group will be called the Enlarged National Group.
6. In future phases , the research and discussion sub-agendas will be developed within the Working Groups, as well as the dynamics that will allow for a clear picture of the direction of the research and results during a given period.