



Resilience in the Face of the Institutional Crisis of the Political System



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Resilience and Peace Building: Frameworks for Assessing Resilience in Guatemala

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Con el apoyo de



Introduction

The Frameworks for Assessing Resilience project began in Guatemala in May 2014 as part of an effort by Interpeace to explore the mechanisms whereby people deal with the conflictive situations in which they live. Under this project, Interpeace seeks to address the contribution that the resilience perspective can make to peace building on the basis of the organization's fundamental principles and values: widespread participation by actors involved in the problem, inclusion of their voices, and their ownership of the processes as a basis for the legitimacy and sustainability necessary for the consolidation of peace.

The project in Guatemala provides inputs for the global debate on resilience and peace building from the experience of a society that twenty years after signing the peace accords still is characterized by a weak State and the persistence of conflictive and violent dynamics that have been adapting and redefining over the years. This provides a different perspective from the other two countries (Liberia and East Timor) in which this same process is being carried out in contexts which are closer in time to the end of conflict. In the specific case of Guatemala, the objective of this process is to provide the national actors with a conceptual and action framework that, after a participatory identification of the ways in which resilience is expressed in our society, will allow for the identification of the existing capacities in society to transform conflicts non-violently and, as a result, promote them. This objective will be achieved by means of a wide participatory process adapted by Interpeace from the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology.

The process began with an exploratory phase aimed at defining a methodological strategy to initiate the debate on resilience in accordance with the country context. It was carried out through focus groups and interviews. The focus groups were conducted in the departments of Sololá and Petén and the interviews were held with actors at a national level. By means of these activities, information was received about two central aspects: the principal problems identified by the participants and the responses to confront them. In this manner three core issues were identified that bring together those problems which society faces with varying degrees of resilience: insecurity and violence, socio-environmental conflicts, and fragility of state institutions.

The core issues served to devise the key questions of the consultation phase, which lasted five months and in which 316 people participated in the following activities:

1. Discussion groups in 11 departments in the country that were chosen according to ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic criteria. These discussion groups brought together local and communal leaders, traditional authorities, local government officials, representatives of civil society and the private sector, churches, and academic institutions.
2. Sectoral discussion groups in order to contrast the departmental perspective with the national perspective. Seven discussion groups were held by sector: women,

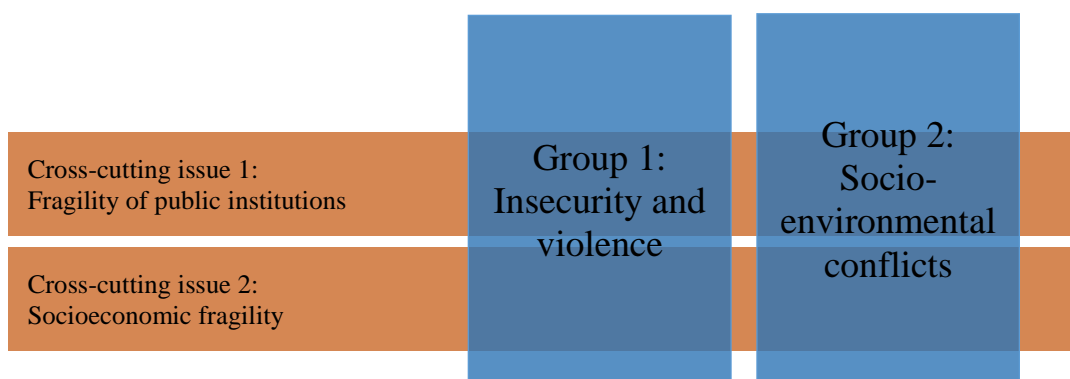
youth, political parties, indigenous peoples, resistance organizations, the private sector, and experts in resilience.

3. In addition, forty in-depth interviews were held with social actors chosen from within the discussion groups.

The consultation phase was key for the participatory approach proposed by Interpeace because that is where the necessary conditions were created to provide legitimacy for the PAR process as well as generating valid information for the following discussions. The principal outcome of this phase was a summary document that chronicled the discussion phase with the view in mind of providing inputs for the discussion and definition of a thematic agenda to be studied by the working groups. The information contained in that document seeks to record the diversity of opinions and perspectives that were expressed during the consultation. Four areas were identified where capacities for resilience were expressed: insecurity and violence, socio-environmental conflicts, fragility of public institutions, and socioeconomic fragility.

The summary document of the consultation phase was presented to the National Group, made up of key actors that represent the different sectors in society: businesspeople, politicians, representatives of organizations of civil society, and experts who participated on a personal basis. The National Group is the guiding body of the PAR process and seeks to bring together those actors committed to the process so that, respecting their differences, they can identify common ground in the search for solutions. Up to now, the National Group has met on two occasions to take decisions on strategy and policy of the PAR process.

The National Group began the discussion by verifying the results of the consultation phase. As evidence of the ownership of the process by the National Group was the decision to organize two working groups to delve deeper into the analysis of resilience by establishing two cross-cutting issues for both groups, as follows:



This analytical framework seeks to address in a comprehensive manner both long-term and structural aspects, which defined as conflictive, constitute the causes which trigger specific and concrete conflicts. Thus, within cross-cutting issues 1 and 2 we find problems such as socioeconomic inequality and poverty, weakness of the State, impunity and inefficiency of the justice system, patronage and corruption in the political system, and the disparities in power that affect and create the conditions for problems grouped under insecurity and violence (theft, homicides, extortions, gangs, drug trafficking, organized crime) and socio-environmental conflicts (limited access and undue use of natural resources, lack of control over extractive industries such as mining, hydroelectric projects, and extensive one-cropping such as the African palm).

Both topics were given priority since the participants considered that they are the principal contributing factors to conflicts in the country. Both topics express the principal motives that provoke an escalation of violence in society and generate the principal social tensions and the distancing among social actors. At the same time, the greatest concentration of actions and capacities for resilience are observed in the responses to the problems grouped under both topics.

The two working groups together have held a total of 15 meetings between February and May last. Working group 1 on insecurity and violence has met 6 times and has organized a forum with experts on the issue of citizenship and violence. Working group 2 on socio-environmental conflicts has met a total of 7 times and has organized 3 forums with experts on the issue of citizen participation and Convention 169 of the ILO, each one from a different perspective: lawyers, the National Dialogue System (government), and the private sector.

As a result of the national crisis that began in April 2015, the national group took the decision to include corruption of the political system and the precarious state of public institutions in the analysis of the capacities for resilience of Guatemalan society. Under that perspective, it was decided to create one single working group to analyze the social protest in response to corruption of the political system as an expression of society's capacity to transform and identify, within that space, the resilient options in the situation that might promote structural transformations in the long term.

Changes in the national context: corruption, citizen protests, and crisis in the political system

On 16 April 2015, the office of the Government's attorney and the International Commission Against Corruption in Guatemala – CICIG – announced a wide-ranging investigation of a powerful network of corruption within the Government of Guatemala. It is estimated that this network, the so-called “La Línea”, used its control of the customs' houses to cheat the government out of some 2.5 million quetzales weekly on average by charging importers up to 30% of the value of imports. The investigations of the attorney's office and the CICIG led to the arrest of 19 individuals belonging to this network, from low-level government officials up to high-level appointees, including the head of the government's tax office (Superintendencia de Administración Tributaria) and the private secretary of the vice-president of the country, Roxana Baldetti. The CICIG and the attorney's office also announced an investigation into the companies that benefitted from the payment of bribes to the corruption network.

The investigation unearthed evidence that pointed to the participation of the vice-president, which led in turn to an increase in citizen repudiation that, after a large peaceful demonstration of more than 30,000 people, ended in the resignation of the vice-president on 9 May. The private secretary of the former vice-president is still on the run.

The national crisis deepened after the Attorney's office and the CICIG announced on 20 May that they were carrying out a second investigation into certain corruption networks in the government. This time the authorities arrested 17 involved in a corruption network within the Guatemalan Institute for Social Security (Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social, IGSS); among those arrested were the president of the Bank of Guatemala, the president and members of the board of the IGSS and other high-level officials. This network made it possible for a contract to be signed with a pharmaceutical firm to provide kidney dialysis for approximately 116 million quetzales. The firm did not meet the legal criteria and 13 people are presumed to have died after using the services provided by the firm. As part of the investigation of this network, participation by members of the judicial branch was uncovered, especially of a judge who provided legal cover for those involved.

The social protest continued to increase in the country and various massive and peaceful demonstrations have taken place in the capital as well as in various departments of the country. Although the protests have expressed a good number of grievances among the population, some issues have been recurrent, such as the resignation of president Otto Pérez Molina and the reform of the political system in general. In the weeks following the beginning of the crisis, in addition to the resignation of vice-president Roxana Baldetti, other members of cabinet have resigned, including the Minister of Energy and Mines, the Minister of Government and one of his vice-ministers.

The institutional crisis that resulted from the investigations about corruption has worsened given the electoral context in which it is occurring. The national electoral board (Tribunal

Supremo Electoral) has called for general elections to be held in September of this year. The larger political parties have been under a cloud of criticism due to a lack of legitimacy, suspected corruption, and receipt of money from illegal sources. The party system in Guatemala is atomized and lacking in institutional traditions, as reflected in short-lived parties which are further weakened by frequent changes of party affiliation by legislators. This situation has led to an accumulation of discontent in certain social groupings and, in consequence, to a generalized rejection of existing electoral options.

The crisis can be characterized at two levels. On the one hand, massive social protests involving large sectors of the population. On the other, the demands for long-term political reforms, which are diverse and lacking in consensus. Finally, there are the political reactions of the government in the face of the crisis and the influence of the United States in defining the course of the institutional crisis.

Social protest. From the moment that the Attorney's office and the CICIG published their investigations, there have been three massive protests in the capital (of between 40-60 thousand people each time) and various minor ones. In some of the departmental capitals there have been protests with up to 15 thousand in attendance. The main characteristic of the protests is that they are peaceful and bring together various social sectors without a clear leadership. Calls to attend have been made through social networks, which also have defined the main issues to be raised during the demonstrations. Social networks have involved groups of Guatemalans who live abroad and who have joined in the protests, especially in various cities in the United States and Europe.

Even though some politicians and social sectors have sought to claim leadership of the citizen movement, these attempts have been rejected during the protests since no traditional political actor has sufficient legitimacy to lead the mobilization. The citizen protest is made up principally of urban populations of middle class extraction and young students from the different universities in the country. At the same time, other traditional social movements have joined up (peasants and indigenous peoples), as well as some new groupings (gender diversity, urban artists, environmentalists). The heterogeneous make-up of these mobilizations is reflected in the nature of their demands which can be identified at two levels:

- a) Demands in common. During the first moments, the main demands centred on a rejection of corruption in the political system, the resignation of government officials (vice-president, president of the Republic, ministers), trial for corrupt officials, return of assets acquired fraudulently. The evolving crisis has led to other demands acquiring priority status: reform of the political system (especially of the political parties) and rejection of elections (especially of the current front-runner for the presidency in light of his presumed links to corruption and organized crime).
- b) Sectoral demands. The citizen mobilization has opened up room for each sector to express its own specific demands which range all the way from the rejection of extractive industries and trials for genocide to the recognition of cultural and ethnic

identities. The citizen movement is a reflection of widespread dissatisfaction, both traditional and emerging, that exists in society.

Both of these expressions of citizen mobilization have coalesced around anti-corruption demands. However, the social groups involved are contradictory insofar as the majority of the participants are middle class people whose level of political involvement is low and traditionally distant from the demands made by social movements, which have been highly political and radical. It should be pointed out that the demands of this middle class that protests in the streets have become atomized and diversified, moving from placards with slogans against corruption to others which say “It’s not your turn”, the expression of rejection of the presidential candidate with the highest poll ratings (Manuel Baldizón, of the Líder party).

Political reforms. Different social sectors – including universities, think tanks, and the private sector through their commercial, industrial, and business associations – have sought to take advantage of the institutional crisis and the force of the social protest to push for long-term political reform that includes reforms to the electoral and political parties law, to the congress of the Republic, to the Constitution, and other secondary legislation.

For these groups, the reform of the political system, especially with reference to political parties, has been a constant demand given that corruption and patronage in political parties are believed to be key elements that contribute to the weakness of the State. This demand intensifies within an electoral context because the candidates who have the highest survey ratings for the September 2015 elections belong to the parties which have made greatest use of patronage mechanisms in their campaigns.

At the same time, corruption and patronage in political parties have been criticized and linked to a lack of control and transparency in the financing of political parties. It is well-known that financing of political parties has depended historically on support by big business but in the last years it is presumed that it is also linked to illegal activities (corruption, drug trafficking, tax evasion, etc.), which points to an absence of formal mechanisms of control and accountability. In fact, the investigations carried out by the Attorney’s office and the CICIG show that some people linked to corruption networks were part of the group that financed the party in office. The search for deep changes in the political system has convinced some sectors to propose the need for a constitutional reform. According to some sectors, this reform should enable the structural reforms necessary to transform the political system in general.

Nonetheless, both a reform of the electoral and political parties law and the reform of the Constitution face two situations which deepen the crisis and determine the direction of the reforms: the resignation or continuation in office of the sitting president of the Republic and the postponement of the general elections scheduled for September. No consensus exists among the political actors about these two aspects which reflect divisions among them that will affect the nature and viability of any proposal.

The political actors that have been most visible in these debates are: the Social and Popular Assembly (Asamblea Social y Popular, ASP) that brings together more than 70 social, indigenous, and peasant groupings; the Citizen Movement against Corruption (Movimiento Ciudadano contra la Corrupción) made up of approximately 20 diverse groups from both the private sector and civil society; the Platform for Reform of the State (Plataforma para la Reforma del Estado), convened by the University of San Carlos of Guatemala, which has brought together diverse groupings, including the ASP, academics, and civil society organizations; and the National Convergence for Political Reform (Convergencia Nacional para la Reforma Política) made up of 10 organizations of civil society and academia.

The actors most committed to profound reforms of the electoral and political parties law that would take effect during the current electoral process are the ASP and the Platform for Reform of the State. On the other hand, the National Electoral Board (Tribunal Supremo Electoral, TSE), the National Convergence for Political Reform, and the Congress of the Republic have put forward various proposals for reform of the political system but to take effect until the next electoral process four years away. The Citizen Movement against Corruption has focused only on actions against corruption without taking stand up to now on the other issues that are being debated.

There is also a proposal to convene a National Constituent Assembly to reform the Constitution of the Republic. This proposal has been mentioned by the ASP as a strategic objective in the medium term that would be considered after reforms to the electoral and political parties law.

With regards to the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras, CACIF), the main private sector umbrella organization, since the beginning of the crisis it has criticized corruption in the government and supported the investigations carried out by the Attorney's office and CICIG. In fact, CACIF supported the investigations against businesspeople linked to the corruption networks and supported citizen demonstrations and the need to reform the electoral and political parties law. This grouping united around a call to demand the resignation of former vice-president Roxana Baldetti. However, there is no consensus within this group about the resignation of the president of the Republic, the postponement of the general elections, and the reform of the Constitution.

With regards to the international community, the government of the United States, the country which has provided the greatest support for CICIG, has publicly stated through its embassy in Guatemala that president Pérez Molina should end his term in office as prescribed and that the electoral process should go forward. This position has provoked expressions of rejection by different social sectors who mistrust the public involvement of that embassy in matters of internal politics. Other representatives of the international community have publicly supported president Pérez Molina in order to avoid an

interruption of the presidential term and to guarantee the institutional stability of the country.

In summary, the institutional crisis has centred around the high levels of corruption and its impact on public services, the patronage supported and practiced by the political parties, the presence of corrupt private interests within the system of justice, and the need for a profound reformation of the State.

Resilience and peace building within the framework of the institutional crisis in Guatemala

The elements that make up the current institutional crisis were profiled during the different phases of the resilience and peace building process (exploration, consultation, and working groups) and were set down in the summary document of the consultation phase. In this sense, during the consultation phase the fragility of public institutions was pointed out (cross-cutting issue 1 of the working groups) as a situation of low development of technical, administrative and/or financial capacities of the State's institutions to carry out the legal mandate for which they were created and thereby satisfy the citizenry's demands. One of the inputs of these discussions was to define fragility as a low capacity to resist the influence of factors that turn institutions towards favouring private and personal interests above the public interest, such as corruption and patronage (Interpeace 2015: 50).

As a structural problem of the country, the fragility of state institutions is expressed as:

- 1) A lack of capacity to respond adequately according to their mandate; and
- 2) A lack of capacity to resist corruption and patronage.

While it is true that both aspects are directly related, for the citizens who were consulted the second one is more relevant because it is perceived as the main reason of the inefficiency and incapacity of the institutions to respond to citizen's needs. For those consulted in the 11 departments and in the 6 sectors, the main institutions that have the greatest weakness are those charged with security and justice such as the National Civilian Police (Policía Nacional Civil, PNC), the Attorney's office, and the courts (Interpeace: 2015:52-53). This perception is grounded in three aspects: limited geographical coverage, excessive bureaucratic entanglements when doing follow-up, and, finally, limited capacity to resolve the problems which are brought to their attention. In addition, those consulted also pointed out the precariousness of the health system, which was considered deficient due to a lack of supplies and specialized personnel, as well as negligence by the employees.

The weakness of public institutions was also associated by the participants with the high levels of "politicization", that is, the intervention by private interests in the structures of the State and the municipalities. Its principal expressions are patronage, influence peddling, low levels of investment in communities which voted for the losing party, abuses of authority, high concentrations of power, and a lack of commitment by elected officials.

Corruption was identified as the principal mechanism to promote and permit patronage in the appointment to public employment, to hand out public contracts, to receive favours from the courts, and to protect illegal activities, including organized crime.

These conditions were described by the participants in the consultation phase and the working groups as obstacles for the transformation of the living conditions of the population.

The consultation phase also included questions for the participants to define priorities that would help to strengthen resilience in society (Interpeace 2015:82). In this respect, the priorities mentioned to overcome the fragility of public institutions include the following:

1. The use of the State for patronage, especially with regards to the design, amount, and distribution of the public budget as well as the mechanisms to audit it.
2. Fiscal reform and public spending.
3. Reforms of the system of political parties, especially with relation to the financing of political parties, very expensive electoral campaigns, and the use of public monies by political parties.
4. Reform of the electoral and political parties law.
5. Development of policies to fight corruption and tax evasion.
6. The role of development councils in the improvement of their communities or as allies of political parties and the government.
7. Current legislation on the civil service and the development councils.

All these issues set the ground for the two working groups to analyze their impact in two specific issues of the process: insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts. For Group 1 (Insecurity and Violence), the corruption of the security forces, especially the police, is the main cause not only of its inefficiency but also of the involvement of criminal groups with the security forces. Corruption was also associated with the lack of capacity by the State to enforce existing socio-environmental regulations, which is a factor of conflict between society and the State.

The groups also stated that corruption not only is harmful to the State and society when it allows the undue use of public resources but is also one of the principal factors of social discontent and resistance to comply with citizen obligations, such as paying taxes and the respect of laws and procedures.

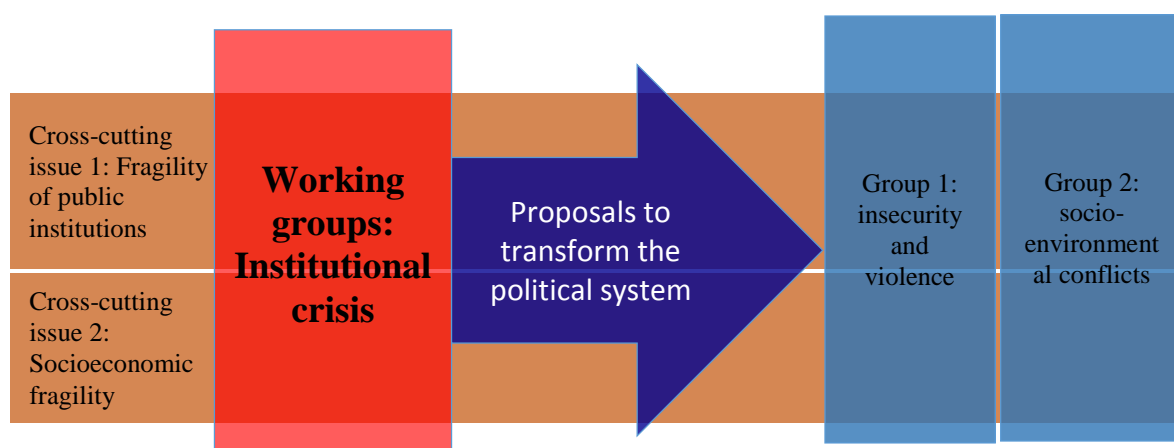
Both the consultation phase and the working groups were respectful of sectoral differences but, beyond the differences surrounding the two specific issues (insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts), the PAR process detected an inter-sectoral coincidence around concern for the current conditions of the State's structure and the need to discuss the ways it can be transformed in order to overcome corruption and patronage (Interpeace 2015:86).

The crisis conjuncture and the structural perspective

On the basis of the preceding elements, it is possible to state that, from the perspective of resilience and peace building, the components of the current institutional crisis were identified as structural aspects of the conflictive situation in the country. In this respect, the crisis does not erupt without social and institutional precedents. On the contrary: the crisis is the extreme expression of multiple underlying conflicts in society, in which specific factors such as the investigations by the Attorney's office and the CICIG act as trigger mechanisms of social discontent. In this sense, corruption of public officials becomes the "glue" that brought together the massive outpouring of citizen mobilizations. Within the context of an electoral process marred by the discredit of the principal candidates, citizen demands went so far as to call for deeper institutional reforms, that is, of a structural nature as identified by Interpeace in the process of resilience and peace building.

From this perspective, the current crisis is another expression of conflictive social situations that evidenced the priority of combating corruption and patronage to achieve social transformations and peace. For this reason, the National Group of the process determined that the crisis represents an opportunity to address deep-seated aspects of the social structure that in other circumstances would not be possible.

For this reason, the National Group decided that the two working groups that were addressing structural and long-term aspects should become one single group given that the crisis conjuncture might create opportunities for more profound changes in the political system and thereby focus their efforts on a shared proposal by the participating sectors. The proposals should focus on the transformation of the political system as a necessary condition for a continuation, later on, of work on the two longer-term issues (insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts).



Resilience in times of institutional crisis

In operational terms, resilience has been defined by the working groups as the capacity that people, groups, communities, or societies have to confront or adapt to adverse situations, in which their individual and/or collective interests are affected, by creating conditions to seek out sustainable alternatives that will allow them to overcome such situations and turn conflicts into collective opportunities. The emphasis of the process has been to identify the capacities in society to transform both structural adversities as well as those that require immediate attention in nonviolent and collaborative terms.

From this perspective, the National Group seeks to identify those capacities that have made mass and non-violent mobilizations possible in a society characterized by fear and indifference towards political issues. Guatemalan society had not witnessed such a level of unified citizen mobilization in all the years of democracy since the end of the war. On the contrary, the few protests had been characterized by violence and involving only given sectors.

This crisis opened up public debate and citizen concerns for overcoming the legacies of corruption and a weak political system that were left behind in society by an incomplete process of post-war transformation and democratization. This drive, which has joined together wide sectors previously apathetic to becoming involved in citizen mobilization, represents an opportunity to identify capacities for resilience both implicit in the social processes as well as in specific expressions called “moments of resilience.”

Implicit resilience was observed in citizens’ capacity in the face of structural, long-term problems, in other words, the resilience to conflictive situations (fragility of public institutions and socio-economic fragility). At the same time, the consultation phase and the working groups identified capacities for resilience in the face of concrete expressions of those conflictive situations (insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts) that took shape in the form of community organizations, historic social protest, indifference, and the search for sectoral alliances, both to find alternative forms of subsistence and protection as well as demanding from the State an improvement in the quality of life.

On the other hand, the “moments of resilience” are those specific expressions, unpredictable and spontaneous, that emerge as the product of an accumulative effect that resilience produces in societies. What is key in these situations is understanding the trigger mechanisms of those moments, that is, the factors that produce the resilient reaction.

Under this perspective, social mobilization in Guatemala, which was spontaneous and unexpected, was triggered mainly by the investigations published by the Attorney’s office and the CICIG which provoked social indignation in the face of an excessive abuse of state power in diverse government spheres. From the perspective of the working group, a characteristic feature of this crisis is the “indignation by a third party”, that is, the indignation that emerged when it became evident that the cause of the precarious

condition of public services was not so much the lack of resources but the excessive corruption in the governing circles that directly affects the most vulnerable groups in the population.

Starting from this, the National Group seeks to define a route for reforms that, taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the crisis, will set down the foundations for deeper transformations in society. This also entails the identification, on the one hand, of the trigger mechanisms of citizen mobilization and, on the other, the transformations that the crisis already allows us to observe, such as:

1. Collective, multi-sectoral action.
2. Rejection of the use of violence in social protest.
3. Overcoming historical differences among social groups.
4. The use of public spaces for the exercise of citizenship.
5. Participation by social groups traditionally apathetic towards politics.

Given that the centre of attention of the crisis is the State's structure and the relations of patronage and corruption that dominate it, one of the key questions has been: What is the role that the State plays in facilitating or impeding resilient capacities and actions in society? As a result, both the discussions and the actions of the National Group are centred on the capacities for resilience in the face of problems created by the current structure of the State, on the one hand, and the capacities for resilience to transform those structures, on the other. Both aspects are necessary conditions to push for specific changes in the issues of insecurity and justice as well as socio-environmental conflicts.

Methodological proposal for follow-up

The National Group took the decision to bring the two working groups together in one single group in order to delve deeper in the search for options to transform the political system in the context of the crisis. This does not mean that the two issues identified previously are tossed aside but that the search for institutional changes of a structural character takes priority, which in the context of the crisis can create the necessary conditions to make possible specific proposals on insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts.

The National Group, as the leading body of the process, has demonstrated with this decision its level of ownership that key social actors have over the process and the legitimacy that they provide for this multi-sectoral political meeting ground. The PAR approach fostered by Interpeace confirms that the participatory spaces for dialogue respond to the political context and are dynamic. The fact that the National Group responds to a crisis of the magnitude of the one in Guatemala shows:

1. Legitimacy of the multi-sectoral meeting ground. The participating social sectors agree that the meeting ground can bring together actors that in other circumstances would not be talking. This space for dialogue of the resilience and peace building process has been the only one which, before the current crisis, already reflected a

multi-sectoral character around a common topic. In this sense, in the current conjuncture, this is considered an advantage by the participating social actors because, even if there are other meeting points that bring together different sectors, this process had achieved trust among the actors before the current crisis and functioned as a mechanism for dialogue for actors on the extreme ends of the social spectrum (private sector and social sector). However, the political dynamic generated by the institutional crisis has made the social actors stake out positions and coalesce around the different ways out of the crisis depending on their sectoral perspective, which in turn does not allow all of them to converge on one single meeting ground that would bring together all interests.

2. Ownership of the process. The National Group has shown once more its ownership of the political space and the process at a moment when it decided to change the direction of the process to confront the crisis and seek out multi-sectoral solutions.
3. Ownership of the resilience perspective. At the same time that the political space is perceived as legitimate and multi-sectoral, the National Group has approached the crisis from the perspective of resilience, that is, the search for social capacities that will allow groups to confront social problems of a structural character as well as those elements which bring together social groups around specific demands.
4. Development of proposals for action. The National Group identified the opportunity provided by the crisis to develop concrete proposals for action in order to transform the political system both in the short run and in the medium term as a basis for continuing to work on insecurity and violence and socio-environmental conflicts.

In the short term, the working group seeks to:

- Become acquainted with the proposals for reform put out by the different social sectors.
- Identify the new leaderships or collective leaderships that have emerged during the crisis.
- Take advantage of the citizen mobilization and channel change through possible routes that will lead to reform of those aspects which have perverted the political system.
- Find shared issues for dialogue and convergence of different positions.

At the same time, the group identified the following risks:

- A predominance of sectoral political agendas that do not include the basic issues.
- The possibility that violence and criminal acts may break out if the demands are not met or as a result of specific group interests.
- Polarization and confrontation among the social actors.
- A demagogic response/approach to citizen demands.
- Pressures applied to the national electoral board (Tribunal Supremo Electoral) by powerful influence groups.
- Judicial proceedings against corrupt officials are sidelined or not followed-up.
- The reforms to the political system do not have an effect on the current electoral process due to the short time available.

In the face of this situation, the working group has decided with immediate effect to focus its efforts on the following:

- a) To guide the discussion towards those priority issues of the public political debate.
- b) Get to know the proposals of the different social actors in urban and rural areas and analyze them in a creative fashion.
- c) Instead of proposing an articulated, political scheme in this meeting ground, the idea is to find minimal issues for discussion that will contribute to the development of a road map for reflection, analysis, and proposals.

In thematic terms, the group has decided to focus on:

- Reflect on the forms of citizen articulation: How to create a meeting ground for the diverse actors in search of alternatives?
- Revisit the big issues expressed as demands by the social groups: What minimal aspects (topics) are necessary for the development of proposals? For example, the electoral and political parties law, resignation of government officials, follow-up of court proceedings, etc.
- A reflexive response to key questions such as:
 - What actors have emerged or are emerging?
 - What types of actions have taken place?
 - What capacities can be identified that are linked to these actions?
 - To whom are demands being made?
 - Of what type are these demands? Of what do they consist?
 - What needs to be strengthened? (proposal)

Referencias

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