

**Adding Value: Women's Contributions to  
Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador**

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**WOMEN WAGING PEACE** is a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund that advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world.

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### **About the Authors**

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## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Wars and internal conflicts do not end simply with the signing of peace agreements. To avoid a resurgence of violence, it is necessary to develop and support measures for strengthening the governance, security, justice, and socioeconomic capacities of a state. This is a complex task in any society, but daunting in post-conflict situations. While the international community can provide assistance and valuable resources, the local population, which has no “exit strategy,” has the greatest commitment to building sustainable peace. It is therefore essential to draw on the assets, experiences, and dedication at the local level and among all sectors of society. One sector often overlooked and underestimated is women. In most post-conflict societies women are more than 50 percent of the population and are actively engaged in peace building while addressing the basic survival needs of their families and communities. Yet they are often portrayed as passive victims, and little regard is given to their actual and potential roles in fostering security.

In October 2000, for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council acknowledged that women have a key role in promoting international stability by passing Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. It called on all parties to ensure women’s participation in peace processes, from the prevention of conflict to negotiations and post-war reconstruction. The Women Waging Peace Policy Commission was established to examine peace processes with a particular focus on the contributions of women. This report revisits the Salvadoran disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program from the perspective of women and assesses how a gender perspective can improve such programs worldwide.

## **KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Key Findings**

1. Women's participation in negotiations had a significant impact on reintegration through:
  - ensuring the inclusion of women fighters in benefits programs; and,
  - recognizing and including non-combatant members of the opposition movement.
2. Women played an important stabilizing role in the early phases of reintegration.
3. Despite socio-economic constraints, women played a leading role in reconstruction efforts.
4. Women have been most active, and gender roles most transformed, in communities that received continual and systematic support. These communities are among the success stories in terms of overall development.
5. The lack of significant systematic support for women has been detrimental to the country's overall development and is a missed opportunity with regard to social capital.

### **Recommendations**

1. When **designing DDR programs**, international and local teams should:
  - include gender experts to work with agencies designing and implementing programs;
  - ensure women's participation in negotiations and decision making regarding DDR;
  - consult regularly with former combatants and community members, particularly women, to ensure that programs address their needs; and
  - include a gender-sensitive monitoring component, so that corrective action can be taken when needed.
2. During **demobilization**, program designers must ensure that physical and medical needs of women are adequately addressed by:
  - creating secure centers for women, so that they are not at risk of being physically or sexually threatened; and
  - providing basic hygiene and medical attention.
3. More emphasis should be put on programs for **reintegration** and building social capital, including:
  - increased resources and training for community groups;
  - mental health support for people traumatized by war;
  - secure centers for victims of domestic violence and abuse (which increase dramatically in post-conflict societies);
  - women-only programs to encourage economic and political participation in post-war communities; and
  - childcare, which is essential to women's sustained participation in programs.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

In 1992, a twelve-year war between the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES) and the armed opposition, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), ended in a negotiated settlement. In this country of six million, the war had devastating consequences, with over 80 thousand dead, half a million displaced internally, one million in exile, and \$1.6 billion in infrastructure damages.

The United Nations was critical in catalyzing the peace process and engaged directly in peacemaking. One significant component was the DDR program the UN conducted with the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. Between February 1992 and March 1993, an estimated 45,000 combatants were demobilized, including 30,000 FAES soldiers (50 percent of the total force), members of the National Police and other security forces, and 15,000 FMLN members.<sup>1</sup> In El Salvador, unlike in other conflict situations, *tenedores*—non-combatant FMLN supporters and internally displaced people in conflict-affected areas—were included as beneficiaries of reintegration packages. By most accounts, the peace process and DDR program in El Salvador were successful. The country has attained a demilitarized political arena, created a civilian police force, and made progress toward a stronger and more viable democracy.

**This study primarily focuses on FMLN women, as they played a key role throughout El Salvador's struggle as combatants and *tenedores*. They were also fully involved in the peace process and, in contrast to other post-conflict situations, participated in DDR programs. Although women faced immense pressure to return to traditional roles, they were pivotal in the reintegration of former fighters, both men and women. Despite constraints, they continue to be active in their communities, leading reconstruction and development efforts.**

### The War

The civil war in El Salvador officially broke out in 1981, but was the culmination of decades of economic marginalization, social segregation, political repression, failed land reform, and military control of the country. Between 1972 and 1977, there were 37,342 casualties on the revolutionary and popular fronts and 10,073 on the government side.<sup>2</sup>

As activists fled their homes in fear, joined the armed opposition, or fell victim to the FAES's mandatory recruitment, women bore much of the burden of ensuring their families' survival. According to a 1978 UN study, almost 40 percent of the households in San Salvador's poorest neighborhoods were headed by women.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1980, the government-perpetrated assassination of Archbishop Romero and the subsequent massacre of funeral attendees set the stage for more violence. Five revolutionary groups joined to form the FMLN. On January 10, 1981, the FMLN launched its first offensive. War had officially begun.

### FMLN Women in the War

Women served the FMLN as combatants, *colaboradoras* (collaborators), and *tenedoras*. They joined the revolutionary movement as political solutions were systematically rejected, in response to religious convictions, because of family ties, and as an organized response to severe state-led repression. At the height of the war in the 1980s, women combatants constituted nearly 30 percent of the FMLN fighting forces and 40 percent of *tenedoras*.<sup>4</sup>

There are accounts of women-only battalions, and even of a training academy in Chalatenango (northern El Salvador, an FMLN stronghold) for women interested in joining the military command. Not all women were in combat; other responsibilities included logistics, radio communications, surveying and mapping, medical care (*sanitarias*), training in literacy and political education, galvanizing public support, and organizing women's groups in the conflict zones.

As *colaboradoras*, women in FMLN-controlled zones sustained communities and camps. They carried mail to and from San Salvador, produced food, provided clothing and health services, and educated children and adults. Despite the dangers, the war gave many women access to literacy, political education, and skills building and broadened their horizons.

### Peace Negotiations and Women's Voices

By the late 1980s, both the FMLN and the government recognized the impossibility of outright victory. With UN support, a negotiations process was initiated, culminating in the 1992 Chapultepec

agreement, a comprehensive peace accord with detailed processes for ceasefire, disarmament, and demobilization. Negotiations on reintegration and reconstruction plans were left for a later stage. High-ranking women in the FMLN and government participated in all phases of the negotiations: the many sessions leading to the final accords; the meetings at Chapultepec; and, most significantly, the subsequent longer-term negotiations on reintegration. While they regarded themselves as official party negotiators—“not as representatives of a women’s movement”<sup>5</sup>—in the early stages, their presence nonetheless had an important effect on the outcome.

**Disarmament and Demobilization**

Of the 60,000 soldiers of the FAES, including the National Police and other security forces, 30,000 soldiers remained after demobilization.<sup>6</sup> None of them were women. Of the approximately 15,000 FMLN forces reporting for demobilization, 8,552 combatants were demobilized, along with an additional 6,450 “injured non-combatants” and “political personnel.” Of the 8,552 combatants, 29 percent were women (see table).

the peace process. But while they did not address concerns specific to women, their presence in the negotiations made a significant difference, particularly regarding eligibility for reintegration benefits. As Nidia Díaz, a former FMLN *comandante*, recalls,

*In negotiating, when the time came to discuss the concept of beneficiaries, it was understood in our heads that women would participate, but that wasn't [written] specifically. And we had problems because when the lists of beneficiaries were formulated, members of the [negotiating] team did not specifically put down the names of women. It was a very serious problem that we had later because only the men were thought of as beneficiaries, and we had to return to re-do the lists....<sup>8</sup>*

Lynn Sheldon, then a USAID representative involved in the implementation process, recalls the “professional” caliber of women negotiators, who came to the talks with a clear “sense of responsibility” and awareness that “others were depending on them.”<sup>9</sup>

**Composition of FMLN Membership by Demobilization Category**

Category	Women	% of Total	Men	% of Total	Total
Combatants	2,485	29%	6,067	71%	8,552
Injured non-combatants	549	22%	1,925	78%	2,474
Political Personnel	1,458	37%	2,525	63%	3,983
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,492</b>	—	<b>10,517</b>	—	<b>15,009</b>

Source: ONUSAL, Proceso de desmovilización del personal del FMLN<sup>7</sup>

**Eligibility for Reintegration: Women Making the Difference**

Although the numbers to be disarmed and demobilized were outlined in detail at Chapultepec, the specifics of reintegration were decided in post-accord discussions. The FMLN provided the government a list of qualified beneficiaries for inclusion in reintegration programs. This process was extraordinary in that displaced persons and those that provided support—not just arms-bearing fighters—were included in the programs. With hindsight, many female FMLN fighters regret their lack of gender awareness during

**Reintegration: General Success**

Phase one, the “emergency period,” took place between the start of the ceasefire in February 1992 and December 1992. Programs sought to address immediate basic needs, including housing, food, healthcare, and education. The reintegration packages for both male and female combatants even included household goods such as ovens and furniture. Phase two, the “contingency period,” supporting those already demobilized, ran from July 1992 to June 1993. At this point, distinctions between rural and urban resettlement were made for the first time. Phase



three, the “intermediate-term plan,” was specialized and more complex, with scholarships, credit, and technical assistance programs for most beneficiaries, including a specific plan for mid-level commanders.

The two short-term reintegration programs are considered successful because they provided for immediate basic needs, improved infrastructure, and quickly created employment opportunities. There were, however, substantial delays and administrative problems in the implementation of intermediate-term programs.

The important process of land redistribution, *Programa de Transferencia de Tierras* or PTT, in particular, was fraught with obstacles. At the outset, there were 47,500 beneficiaries listed for the PTT. Intense negotiations, along with substantial delays, led to reductions in the numbers qualifying and applying for the program. A 1997 Arias Foundation report indicates that, ultimately, 36,185 of 36,551 agreed-upon beneficiaries received land in some form. Perhaps most significantly, non-combatants represented a majority (approximately 22,000) of the beneficiaries.<sup>10</sup>

An estimated one third of PTT beneficiaries were women.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, they experienced widespread discrimination in the initial stages of land transfer. Women leaders in the FMLN protested on behalf of the women, and their presence at the decision-making level ensured that some of the problems were corrected. Women ultimately did receive land proportional to their participation in the FMLN. Even so, many women across social classes in both rural and urban areas insist that they were marginalized and faced significant discrimination when reintegration programs were being implemented. For example, some local leaders assigned land under the husband’s name, and additional criteria that discriminated primarily against women were added for land entitlement, such as literacy and specific documentation.

#### **Women’s Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction**

At the time of the accords, war fatigue was widespread in El Salvador. Among FMLN fighters and supporters, many were ready to settle into a peaceful life despite economic hardships. Women, in particular, had been significantly affected. They faced

practical constraints, as they headed 29 percent of households following the war.<sup>12</sup> Whereas men were regarded as heroes by their communities for their participation in the war, women combatants were not always as easily accepted. Many felt pressured to adopt traditional roles.

Women’s return to the private sphere, particularly in rural areas, however, had one positive aspect, as it created a stable environment for men. Many former male and female combatants note that it took five to six years to adjust to their new lives. Both men and women now recognize that many women sacrificed opportunities in order to support their husbands and families in the home.

Despite this social regression, in immediate post-war Salvadoran society women struggled to maintain their presence in the public sphere. Alongside their domestic responsibilities, they took on community reconstruction efforts, including physical construction and agricultural work (irrigation, harvesting, and storing produce). Women participated in local community organizations—such as cooperatives, municipal boards, and women’s groups—that supported not only women, but also male former combatants.

Among those who benefited from training programs, women, in particular, have capitalized on new skills and knowledge. For example, in the Bajo Lempa region, a low-lying area prone to mudslides and flooding, women ex-combatants have mobilized their communities in emergency response efforts. In addition to providing aid to community members, women maintain and mend levees, monitor local industries, and lobby government. “Women are playing a leading role,” says Arnoldo García Cruz, president of the Community Organization for Developing an Economic and Social System in the Bajo Lempa. “They are undertaking work in the church, the schools... [and] supporting economic development.”<sup>13</sup>

In urban centers, a core of strong, well-known, and respected women’s organizations has developed, including La Asociación de Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida (“Las Dignas”), the Association of Rural Women, El Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación y Desarrollo de la Mujer (IMU), and Las Mélicas. Led in many cases by former combatants and activ-

ists, these organizations represent the needs and interests of Salvadoran women at the national level. Campaigns such as *Mujeres 94*, where women's organizations crossed political party lines, have made the women's movement more visible.

### Conclusion

The success of El Salvador's peace process and DDR efforts is, in many ways, the result of women being present in negotiations and active in implementing official programs and civil society initiatives.

Although women did not enter negotiations processes with a specific agenda of "women's rights" or "gender awareness," when they observed that women could be excluded, they rectified the situation, securing equal access to benefits.

Women had a clear sense of responsibility for the livelihood of thousands of FMLN supporters and sought to ensure their wellbeing. A result was that the majority of land beneficiaries were non-combatants. In addition, even the most marginalized and vulnerable, such as female-headed households, received some support. This spread of benefits had significant impact on the sustainability of the reintegration and reconstruction process.

In the immediate post-war period, women's willingness to sacrifice their own ambitions and step back into traditional roles left the public and productive sphere open for male ex-combatants, giving them responsibilities and much needed self-esteem. Women did not retreat completely, however. The emergence of strong women's organizations led to the redressing of some implementation problems and gaps in the reintegration process for both men and women. In response to endless needs, they developed a range of practical programs that targeted the most disadvantaged groups. Although the programs were small-scale, the sheer number of initiatives enabled broad coverage of the population. Program areas included health, leadership training, education, microcredit, and enterprise. A 1998 USAID report noted the importance of local NGOs in facilitating the national plan for reconstruction, particularly as they were able to provide services to populations in remote areas.<sup>14</sup> In addition, civil society organizations employed many

Salvadorans, providing training grounds for women who later moved into leadership positions at local and national levels.

Despite substantial evidence in El Salvador of the actual contributions of women to post-war reintegration and reconstruction, in general there has been limited acknowledgment or support for their efforts. In the few communities where women were supported, they have shown their commitment to leadership and development. They represent immense social capital and are indicative of the vast untapped potential of women across the country. No society struggling to emerge from war can afford to ignore such resources.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Edelberto Torres-Rivas, "Insurrection and Civil War in El Salvador," *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN Operations in Cambodia and El Salvador*, eds. Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone, and Robert C. Orr (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 221.
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- <sup>5</sup> Ana Guadalupe Martínez, personal interview, 18 July 2002; Norma de Dowe, interview with Salomé Martínez, 1 August 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> Cassafranco Roldán, et. al., 34
- <sup>7</sup> Luciak 4.
- <sup>8</sup> Trans. Camille Pampell Conaway. Qtd. in Norma Vázquez, *Las Mujeres: Refugiadas y Retornadas* (San Salvador: Las Dignas, 2000) 151.
- <sup>9</sup> Lynn Sheldon, personal interview, 9 October 2003.
- <sup>10</sup> Cassafranco Roldán, et. al. 36; *El Salvador, Area Económica y Social: Programas de Reinserción* (San Salvador: El Salvador, 1995) 10 October 2003 <<http://www.casapres.gob.sv/acuer8.htm>>.
- <sup>11</sup> Luciak 45.
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- <sup>13</sup> Sarah Gammage and Melany Machado, "The Feminization of Community Activism: The Role of Women in Post Conflict El Salvador." Field report and analysis conducted in 2003. Washington, DC: Women Waging Peace, 2003, 4.
- <sup>14</sup> United States, United States Agency for International Development, *Project Assistance Completion Report: Peace and National Recovery Project 519-0394* (San Salvador: United States of America AID Mission to El Salvador, 1998) 6.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1992, a 12-year war between the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES) and the armed opposition, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), ended in a negotiated settlement. In this country of six million, the war had devastating consequences, with over 80,000 dead, half a million displaced internally, one million in exile, and \$1.6 billion in infrastructure damages.<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations, crucial in catalyzing the peace process, engaged directly in peacemaking. One important component of the peace process was the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program the UN conducted with the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. Between February 1992 and March 1993, an estimated 45,000 combatants were disarmed and demobilized, including 30,000 FAES soldiers (50 percent of the total force), members of the National Police and other security forces, and 15,000 FMLN members.<sup>2</sup> Although there were delays and obstacles, the reintegration process in El Salvador was exceptional in that *tenedores*—non-combatant FMLN supporters and internally displaced people in conflict-affected areas—were included as beneficiaries of reintegration packages. By most accounts, the peace process and DDR program in El Salvador were successful. The country has attained a demilitarized political arena, created a civilian police force, and made progress toward a stronger and more viable democracy.

Women played a key role throughout El Salvador's struggle as combatants and FMLN *tenedores*. They were also fully involved in the peace process and, in contrast to other post-conflict situations, participated in DDR programs. While there was minimal focus in the DDR process on gender issues specifically, women brought to the table perspectives and ideas that significantly impacted both the planning and implementation of programs. Of particular note, women played a pivotal role in the reintegration and rehabilitation of former fighters, both men and women. Despite enduring social, cultural, and political constraints, they continue to be active in their communities, leading reconstruction and development efforts.

**This report revisits the Salvadoran conflict and peace process from the perspective of women. Drawing on field-based interviews, it outlines women's role in the war and illustrates how their participation in peace negotiations led to a more inclusive DDR program. This study documents women's contributions to the reintegration of fighters and their leadership in the reconstruction of El Salvador. Finally, it demonstrates the importance of maximizing existing social capital in post-conflict populations to enhance stabilization and long-term reconstruction efforts.**

Outlined here are the rationale for this study, an explanation of research methodology, and the working definitions that frame this report.

### Rationale

The adoption of UN Resolution 1325 by the Security Council in 2000 committed the UN to integrating gender considerations into DDR programs. It also placed responsibility for mainstreaming gender in DDR on the implementing agencies.

Whereas DDR “good practices” have been studied in detail, the gender dimensions are still relatively unknown or largely overlooked.<sup>3</sup> In general, reports and assessments of DDR focus on the needs and concerns of combatants, usually perceived to be male. The few studies on women's involvement in these issues have been written since the late 1990s and offer analysis and recommendations for the inclusion of a gender perspective in DDR programming.<sup>4a</sup> Ranging from the need to target female ex-combatants to the importance of arranging separate housing facilities for abducted women and girls, suggested guidelines are just beginning to be put into practice. And at the time of El Salvador's DDR program, this documentation was non-existent. This report provides policymakers with lessons learned in the case of El Salvador and urges the implementation of guidelines that have since been developed to address the inclusion of women and civilians in DDR programming.

<sup>1</sup>Please see the bibliography section for reports on gender issues and DDR conducted to date.

El Salvador is a useful case study when assessing women's role in and contributions to DDR for several reasons. First, a significant proportion of the demobilized combatants were women (approximately 30 percent of the FMLN).<sup>5</sup> This allows for analysis of women's perspectives and experiences as combatants and as those taking the lead to reintegrate and rehabilitate men and women after the war. Second, the Salvadoran peace process is regarded as one of the more successful,<sup>6</sup> allowing for lessons to be drawn for replication in other post-conflict countries. Finally, the peace agreement was signed more than 10 years ago, providing an important period for analysis and reflection on what might have been done differently had the needs and concerns of men and women, including the potential resources each could offer in the reconstruction of the country, been considered.

### Research Methodology

The methodology for this report included an extensive literature review on DDR in general and on the Salvadoran conflict and peace process in particular. Primary research was conducted during two weeks of field research in El Salvador in July 2002 and through follow-up consultations by a local research team.<sup>b</sup> Interviews and focus group discussions with FAES and FMLN men and women in urban and rural areas took place in the departamentos, or provinces, of Cabañas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, San Salvador, San Vicente, and Usulután. Researchers also conducted phone interviews with relevant international actors worldwide. In all, approximately 40 interviews were conducted with international, national, and local decision makers, planners, and implementers of DDR programs, as well as with civil society representatives and scholars. In addition, nine focus group discussions were held with approximately 30 participants.

This report focuses primarily on women in the FMLN movement, because while they were combatants and participated in the DDR process, there were no women combatants in the FAES. Yet

women from both sides of the conflict contributed to post-war reconstruction, as demonstrated in the latter sections of this study.

### Definitions

#### Peace Processes

Just as scholars have identified the "lifecycle" of conflict,<sup>7</sup> current thinking in the field identifies a lifecycle of peace. The establishment of peace is not a single event, but rather a process characterized by progress and setbacks, successes and failures. Observers of peace processes, including those who live in societies with protracted conflict, are all too familiar with premature celebration of ceasefires and peace accords that are later violated. Even if a settlement holds, the transition to a state of peace is a long-term operation. It requires extensive logistical and financial measures to create or reestablish the physical, social, and political infrastructures necessary for the country to transition towards a culture of peace.

Perhaps the most realistic approach to understanding the peace process is to acknowledge that, though negotiations are "the best-known stage in a process of peace," as Anderlini et al. write in *Journeys Through Conflict: Narratives and Lessons*,

*[They] represent but one moment. Though essential, they nevertheless do not exhaust all the possibilities of actions or initiatives that such a process may require. For negotiations to take place, prenegotiations are necessary, be they formal or informal. For a political settlement to succeed, implementation of the provisions of an accord in the postnegotiation period is vital. In other words, it could be said that peace processes have three broad phases: preparation, transformation, and consolidation.*<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that these three phases are seldom distinct; they blend into one another in a continuum from ceasefire toward the consolidation of peace. Timelines often blur, for example, when the reintegration phase of DDR ends and the longer-term process of reconstruction begins.

<sup>b</sup>Camille Pampell Conaway and Eugenia Piza-Lopez conducted the initial research in July 2002. Salomé Martínez assisted with follow-up interviews and focus group sessions throughout 2002 and 2003. Sarah Gammage, economist for the Centro de Estudios Ambientales y Sociales para el Desarrollo Sostenible (CEASDES), a San Salvador-based organization, contributed written portions of research compiled from previous work. Other representatives of CEASDES also conducted follow-up interviews in the summer of 2003.

This study focuses on women's involvement in the Salvadoran negotiations process or *preparation* phase; the immediate post-conflict period or *transformation* phase, specifically the participation of women in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); as well as contributions made by women to the longer-term process of reconstruction, or the *consolidation* phase.

#### **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)**

International policymakers consider DDR one of the most important steps in any peace process. The World Bank has defined a successful DDR program as “the key to an effective transition from war to peace.”<sup>9</sup> Although each of the three elements of DDR has distinctly different goals and requires independent planning, the phases do overlap and are dependent upon each other.<sup>10</sup>

The UN defines **disarmament** as “...the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone.”<sup>11</sup> Former combatants are gathered in pre-determined assembly areas, where weapons are confiscated, safely stored, and eventually destroyed. They then receive support in the form of food aid, shelter, clothing, medical attention, basic education, and orientation programs. In addition, censuses are often conducted, and ex-combatants are issued discharge documentation.<sup>12</sup>

**Demobilization** is both the formal disbanding of military formations and the release of combatants from a “mobilized” state.<sup>13</sup> Discharge of ex-combatants often occurs over a period of time, during which they are usually transported to their home districts and the process of initial reinsertion begins.<sup>14</sup>

Nicole Ball of the University of Maryland breaks down **reintegration** into two phases—initial reinsertion and long-term reintegration.<sup>15</sup> Reinsertion refers to the short-term arrival period of an ex-combatant into his/her former home or into a new community. Support during this phase may include basic household goods, land, food supplements, and housing materials. Reintegration takes a long-term approach, to assist the community and the ex-combatant in the difficult transition to civilian life.

Assistance during reintegration usually includes job placement services, skills training, credit schemes, scholarships, and rehabilitation programs.

The international community at times refers to a second “R” in DDR, which represents “rehabilitation.” This concept encompasses difficult issues, such as the need to address the psychological and emotional aspects of returning home and problems that arise in relation to the wider community. Nearly all DDR programs address rehabilitation in some form, but the most often-used acronym for the process is DDR.

Security sector reform—such as dismantling and restructuring the military and constructing a new civilian police force—is often included in discussions surrounding disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. For the purposes of this paper, DDR will only include the processes defined above and will **not** address issues pertaining to security sector reform.

#### **Ex-combatientes and Ex-comandantes**

An *ex-combatiente* or ex-combatant refers to any individual—male or female—who carried a weapon and actively participated in the fighting. For the purposes of this study, we will use the term combatant to refer to members of both the FMLN and the FAES.

In the case of the FMLN, the term *ex-comandante*, or ex-commander, was used to refer to those holding middle and top leadership roles. The *ex-comandantes*, both men and women, usually came from more educated and higher-income backgrounds, were often from urban areas, or had significant combat experience. In some cases, they were sent for combat training to Vietnam or Cuba.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Gender**

The term “gender” refers to the socially constructed—as opposed to biologically determined—identities of men and women. Gender is not the same as “sex,” and gender differences are not the same as sex differences. For instance, the ability of women to bear children is a sex, or biologically determined, difference from men; that women, in many societies, are responsible for food preparation and household chores is a gender, or socially constructed, difference.

Gender roles are assigned to men and women early in socialization. They cut across public and private spheres; are specific to a given culture at a given time; are affected by other forms of differentiation such as race, ethnicity, and class; and can change in different socio-political and economic contexts within a society. World Bank literature notes that in any given society, gender shapes the definitions of acceptable responsibilities and functions for men and women in terms of “social and economic activities, access to resources, and decision making authority.”<sup>17</sup>

This report revisits the Salvadoran disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program from the perspective of women and assesses how a gender perspective can improve such programs worldwide.

## **PART 1: THE TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE**

### **Origins and Evolution of the Conflict**

The civil war in El Salvador officially broke out in 1981, but it was the culmination of decades of economic marginalization, social segregation, political repression, failed land reform, and military control of the country. According to scholar Edelberto Torres-Rivas, “The crisis, which built up over time within the country, grew out of the explosive combination of a weak civil society based on the exclusion of the majority through violent means, and a government that lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the majority.”<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1932, wealthy landowners forged an alliance with the military to protect their interests from a peasant uprising that was violently repressed by the country’s military dictatorship. Hundreds of *campesinos*, or peasants, were killed, but the alliance remained and continued for half a century, providing for military control of the people and landowner control of the economy.<sup>19</sup> The military grew in strength over the years, progressively taking control of government structures. As Torres-Rivas explains, “The Salvadoran army was not merely another institution of the government, but the government itself.”<sup>20</sup>

By the mid 1970s, the situation for the majority of Salvadorans was desperate. In addition to the high social and human costs of escalating tensions, general living conditions in the country were worsening. As activists fled their homes in fear, joined the armed opposition, or fell victim to the FAES’s mandatory recruitment, women bore much of the burden of ensuring their families’ survival. According to a 1978 UN study, women headed almost 40 percent of the households in San Salvador’s poorest neighborhoods.<sup>21</sup>

The path to war was well underway by the late 1970s, as peasant organizations began to invade and burn properties, at times kidnapping and executing landowners, and demanding land and better working conditions. The military responded by assassinating nearly 800 community leaders and opening fire on popular protests across El Salvador.<sup>22</sup> Between 1972 and 1977, before the formal outbreak of war, there were 37,342 casualties among the popular (and increasingly revolutionary) fronts and 10,073 on the side of the government.<sup>23</sup>

The attention of the international community was drawn to El Salvador in March 1980 with the government-perpetrated assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the subsequent massacre of funeral attendees. A massive popular response followed the assassination, and on October 10, 1980, five revolutionary groups joined forces to form the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).

### **War**

On January 10, 1981, the FMLN initiated its first general offensive, attacking the air force base, military barracks, four departmental capitals, 20 towns, and several areas in San Salvador.<sup>24</sup> War had officially begun. Repressive military action, which included attacks by “death squads,” followed the FMLN offensive. Clandestine and legal pro-government paramilitary groups directed their violence not only at the armed opposition, but also at the civilian population. In 1981 alone, 9,825 civilians were killed.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the war the FMLN maintained control of large areas—sometimes up to a quarter of the country. In these “controlled zones,” FMLN combatants formed camps alongside the civilian population. The effect of this proximity was that even those not taking part in the struggle as armed combatants could provide critical support to the movement.

At the height of the war in the 1980s, most scholars estimate that nearly 30 percent of FMLN combatants were women, and women also constituted approximately 40 percent of *tenedores*.<sup>26</sup> Data from the disarmament and demobilization process conducted by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) confirms these numbers.<sup>27</sup>

Female members of the FMLN came from all backgrounds, including the working class, intellectuals, students, housewives, and peasants.<sup>28</sup> Women joined the FMLN for a number of reasons, including:

- contact with a social climate that encouraged involvement and provided a sense of immediate opportunity to impact society for the better;



- religious convictions (e.g. commitment to social justice based on the teachings of the church and/or outrage at the assassination of Archbishop Romero);
- participation of family members in the movement;
- reaction to decades of severe government repression and brutality, including murders and massacres; and
- basic maternal instinct—to protect their children and provide a better future for them.<sup>29</sup>

A woman's reason for joining often was linked to geography and background. In many cases, women from urban areas belonged to lower and middle classes, had some education, and joined for political reasons. Rural women often made their decision simply as a matter of survival, both because others in their communities were already participating and as a means of gaining the protection of the FMLN against government violence and repression.<sup>30</sup>

Women served the FMLN as *combatientes* (fighters), as *colaboradoras* (collaborators), and also as *tenedoras* (supporters occupying FMLN-controlled land). In the latter roles, women were responsible for sustaining the communities and camps. They carried mail and messages to and from San Salvador, produced and cooked food, and bought and transported clothing and medicine. The system was highly organized.<sup>31</sup> Women also provided support in logistics, radio communications, surveying and mapping, medical care (*sanitarias*), training in literacy and political education, galvanizing public support, and organizing women's groups in the conflict zones.<sup>32</sup>

In 1986, scholar Marilyn Thomson wrote, "Women have preferred to act as collaborators, as messengers or guards or offering their houses as meeting places, all of which subject them to considerable risk...But as the repression has increased, more women have directly joined the combat forces."<sup>33</sup>

There are accounts of women-only battalions and even of a training academy in Chalatenango (northern El Salvador, an FMLN stronghold) for women interested in joining the military command.<sup>34</sup> Despite the dangers, the war gave many women, particularly those from impoverished rural areas, access to literacy, political education, and skills building. Their exposure to political discourse and access to new knowledge and skills broadened women's opportunities and horizons.

### Negotiation of the Peace Accords

By the late 1980s, the FAES was increasingly unsuccessful against FMLN strongholds, and the FMLN popular base was eroding as people continued to endure the violent responses of the government and the impact of the war in general.<sup>35</sup> Both the FMLN and the government began to recognize that outright victory was impossible.

Throughout the late 1980s, however, repeated efforts to start negotiations from both sides failed, as the parties remained deadlocked on political issues. After one last offensive by the FMLN in November 1989, President Cristiani, of the conservative ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance) party, requested the good offices of UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar to initiate peace

talks.<sup>36</sup> In response, the FMLN partially suspended its attacks, and the stage for formal peace talks was set. Although for many in the FMLN this was not the best path to achieving their revolutionary goals, war fatigue and the desire to return to a peacetime lifestyle led to acceptance of the negotiated solution.

The government of El Salvador and the FMLN reached five agreements between early 1990 and the final peace accords in January 1992. These earlier accords included the Geneva Agreement (April 1990), the Caracas Agreement (May 1990), the San José Agreement (July 1990), the Mexico Agreements (April 1991) and the New York Agreement (September 1991). Each accord built upon the pre-



**Female FMLN combatant; photo courtesy of César Erazo**

vious agreements, establishing timetables and ground rules. ONUSAL was created by the San José Agreement to verify and monitor human rights violations; it began operations in July 1991. The Chapultepec Agreement, signed in Mexico City on January 16, 1992, served as the comprehensive peace accord and contained detailed processes for ceasefire and the consolidation and implementation of the agreement. Its chapters dealt with seven areas: the armed forces; the National Civilian Police (PNC); the judicial system; the electoral system; economic and social questions; political participation by the FMLN; and cessation of armed conflict.<sup>37</sup>

Plans for disarmament and demobilization were detailed in the Chapultepec Agreement; however, it left the specifics of reintegration, part of the longer-term process of reconstruction, for separate negotiations following the signing of the peace accord. Chapultepec simply mandated that the Salvadoran government formulate, in consultation with the FMLN, a National Reconstruction Plan (PRN) that would address socio-economic problems in the country, including the reintegration of former combatants.<sup>38</sup>

Women participated actively in the formation of the Chapultepec Agreement and each of the accords preceding it.<sup>39</sup> María Marta Valladares (“Nidia Díaz”), Lorena Peña (“Rebeca Palacios”),<sup>c</sup> and Ana Guadalupe Martínez, all high-ranking officials of the FMLN, represented their parties at the formal negotiating table. Each was well respected in the negotiations process, but, in the words of Martínez, “not as a woman, but as the representative of a powerful armed group” and with the support and guidance of male party leadership.<sup>40</sup> Thus, despite their involvement, gender issues and women’s specific needs and concerns were not addressed in the Chapultepec accords. A publication by Las Dignas, a leading Salvadoran women’s organization, confirms:

*In neither the words nor the spirit of the accords is there any reference to women, despite the fact that they represent 52.9% of the Salvadoran population, 30% of the 13,600 verified FMLN combatants, and more than 60% of the civilian population that gave their support to the guerrillas during the years of the armed confrontation.*<sup>41</sup>

### Disarmament and Demobilization

With regard to disarmament and demobilization, the ceasefire process was fully elaborated in the Chapultepec accord, including details on the separation of forces; dissolution of the Salvadoran National Police, Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions (BIRI), paramilitary groups and other internal security and intelligence forces; disbanding of the FMLN military structure and its transformation to a civil and political institution; and UN verification of these activities.<sup>42</sup>

The ceasefire began in February 1992 as the FAES assembled into 100 designated points around the country and the FMLN into 50 points in preparation for disarmament.<sup>43</sup> FMLN forces subsequently were consolidated into 15 verification centers and the armed forces into 62 areas.<sup>44</sup> FMLN disarmament and demobilization was to be achieved through a series of five 20-percent reductions beginning May 1, 1992, and reaching 100 percent by October 31 of the same year.<sup>45</sup> FMLN demobilization was linked to the armed forces’ compliance with its reduction schedule.<sup>46</sup>

The ONUSAL military division was responsible for the disarmament of the FMLN. A report by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion explains the process as follows:

*Prior to the formal ceasefire, both parties submitted to the ONUSAL Military Division information on their troop strength and weapons that were to be concentrated in the assembly areas. [...] During the third stage of the ceasefire, the disbanding of the FMLN, all inventories were stored in lockers. [...] Combatants were allowed to keep personal weapons until they left their designated areas to begin the process of reintegration or until the destruction of weapons programs began.*<sup>47</sup>

For the FMLN, those eligible for disarmament and demobilization included not only the *combatientes* and *comandantes*, but also the men and women in supporting roles occupying land in the conflict zones—the *tenedores* described in an earlier section of this report. Women’s ultimate inclusion in the lists provided by the FMLN—in all of the various roles (as combatants and as supporters)—would prove vitally important for their access to reintegration benefits.

<sup>c</sup>Both women are most recognized by their *nommes de guerre*.

Of the 60,000 FAES soldiers, including the National Police and other security forces, 30,000 soldiers remained after demobilization.<sup>48</sup> None were women. Of the approximately 15,000 FMLN forces reporting for demobilization, 8,552 combatants were demobilized. Of these, 29 percent were women (see Table 1).<sup>49</sup> Delays and slow implementation of the agreements meant that FMLN demobilization was not completed until December 1992, and the army was downsized to agreed-upon levels in March 1993.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the significant presence of women in demobilization camps, their needs were not considered in planning or implementation. Rina Garay of the non-governmental organization Fundación Salvadoreña para la Promoción y el Desarrollo Económico (Funsalprodese), founded by leaders of the women’s movement, points out that there was simply no real awareness of women’s most basic needs—not even the provision of feminine hygiene products, for example.<sup>52</sup>

society, Chapultepec only provided an overarching concept for reintegration and reconstruction. The specifics, including which and how much land would be transferred, who would benefit, and how much compensation would be available in the form of credit, were left to post-agreement negotiations.<sup>54</sup>

On the FMLN side, the F-16 negotiated the reintegration aspects of the post-agreement negotiations.<sup>55</sup> On the government side, the Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional (SRN) was formed by the Salvadoran government to implement the National Reconstruction Plan (PRN), including reintegration processes. New negotiation tables addressing “technical” and “political” concerns were established to determine the details of reintegration. According to the Arias Foundation,

*The so-called ‘technical tables’ provided a space to negotiate and discuss implementation of the programs for the parties involved directly in imple-*

**Table 1: Composition of FMLN Membership by Demobilization Category**

Category	Women	% of Total	Men	% of Total	Total
Combatants	2,485	29%	6,067	71%	8,552
Injured non-combatants	549	22%	1,925	78%	2,474
Personnel	1,458	37%	2,525	63%	3,983
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,492</b>	—	<b>10,517</b>	—	<b>15,009</b>

Source: ONUSAL, Proceso de desmovilización del personal del FMLN<sup>51</sup>

Gladys Melara, former president of Fundación 16 de Enero (F-16), a post-war implementing organization associated with the FMLN, as well as Dr. Zoila de Inocentti, director of the women’s ministry of the Salvadoran government, confirms that there was no gender perspective in program design or execution.<sup>53</sup> Yet women were active participants in the disarmament and demobilization stages and, despite obstacles, would be beneficiaries of the reintegration program as well.

**Reintegration**

Although measures were formulated to guarantee former FMLN members full civil and political rights and to promote their full reintegration into

*menting the projects: the government, the FMLN, ONUSAL, and national and international organizations. The ‘political table’ was established to guarantee compliance with the Peace Accord and also served as a higher authority relative to the ‘technical tables,’ for the purpose of resolving disagreements that emerged regarding specific aspects of programs or requests to modify the conditions of the programs.*<sup>56</sup>

The negotiations process was lengthy and involved a tremendous amount of back-and-forth, including compromises when negotiations stalled. In the end, it was decided that reintegration would occur in three phases: the emergency phase, the contingency phase, and the intermediate-term phase.<sup>57</sup>

Phase one, the “emergency” period, took place between the start of the ceasefire in February 1992 and December 1992. Occurring during the encampment period, this phase sought to address immediate basic needs. It was conducted in coordination with ONUSAL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was implemented by the F-16. Its programs and numbers of beneficiaries included: food support (8,500); basic education and literacy programs (8,110); basic healthcare and sanitation projects (8,500); potable water and basic services (8,530); and emergency housing (1,495).<sup>58</sup>

Phase two, the “contingency” period, began with the first demobilization in July 1992 and extended until June 1993 when the intermediate-term phase began. At this point, distinctions between rural and urban resettlement were made for the first time. Activities in this phase consisted of documentation for all, a package of basic household goods (10,657), provision of agricultural supplies (8,779) and credit (1,118), and workshops for agricultural (6,232) and industrial (1,597) support.<sup>59</sup>

Phase three, the “intermediate-term plan,” was specialized and more complex. Programs included rural reintegration or *inserción agropecuaria* (credit for combatants, credit for *tenedores*, and technical assistance); urban reintegration or *inserción en industria y servicio* (credit and technical assistance); scholarship programs (secondary school, technology, university); and programs for mid-level commanders (management training, business administration and vocational training, credit, technical assistance and housing).<sup>60</sup> According to the Arias Foundation, “The objective of these programs was to facilitate the permanent economic reintegration of the ex-combatants of the FMLN and demobilized soldiers of

the FAES.”<sup>61</sup> The programs were later extended to former members of the disbanded National Police.<sup>62</sup>

#### **Women Negotiating Reintegration Packages**

Women were present with men at nearly all of the post-agreement negotiating tables.<sup>63</sup> In fact, one entire technical table, the Reinsertion Commission (Comisión de la Reinserción), was composed of six women—three representing the interests of FMLN ex-combatants (through the F-16), three representing the interests of former FAES soldiers and the Salvadoran government (through the SRN)—and only one man, ONUSAL representative Anders Kompass of Sweden.<sup>64</sup>

Women negotiators are quick to mention that early on they took neither gender issues nor the specific needs of women into account in their negotiations; they were merely exercising their leadership roles within their parties.<sup>65</sup> With hindsight, these negotiators regret their lack of gender awareness during the peace process.<sup>66</sup>

But while the women negotiators did not address concerns specific to women, their presence at the table made a significant difference, particularly regarding eligibility for reintegration benefits. The FMLN provided the government with a list of qualified beneficiaries for inclusion in reintegration programs. In the words of former *comandante* and negotiator María Marta Valladares (“Nidia Díaz”):

*In negotiating, when the time came to discuss the concept of beneficiaries, it was understood in our heads that women would participate, but that wasn't put down specifically. And we had problems because at the time the lists were being formulated with the names of beneficiaries, members of*



**Delmy, female FMLN ex-combatant from Chalatenango; photo courtesy of César Erazo**

*the team did not specifically put down the names of women. It was a very serious problem that we had later because only the men were thought of as beneficiaries and we had to return to re-do the lists. We have learned and are learning...*<sup>67</sup>

The Salvadoran process was extraordinary in that displaced persons and those who provided support while living in the FMLN-controlled zones—not just arms-bearing fighters—were included in reintegration programs.

Norma De Dowe, former executive director of the SRN and negotiator at the postaccord tables on behalf of the government, notes that the women at the negotiating table on reintegration had characteristics that made the process flow more smoothly.<sup>68</sup> The six women easily connected with each other, she recalls. Furthermore, they were quick to recognize and rectify their own mistakes and had common interests (such as a greater degree of compassion and a fundamental concern for the well-being of their children) that allowed them to reach consensus.<sup>69</sup> Ana Guadalupe Martínez, *ex-comandante* and negotiator on behalf of the FMLN, pointed out that, when discussions would begin to devolve into an ideological debate, their patience as women allowed them to continue negotiating on behalf of the populations they represented.<sup>70</sup> Lynn Sheldon, then a representative of the United States Agency for International Development involved in the implementation process, recalls the “professional” caliber of women negotiators, who came to the talks with a clear “sense of responsibility” and awareness that “others were depending on them.”<sup>71</sup>

It is noteworthy that De Dowe, Martínez, and Sheldon, summarizing what others also observed, indicated that gender differences—that is, the presence of both male and female negotiators—had a positive effect on the outcome of negotiations. Still, the lack of a deliberate gender perspective in designing reintegration programs, and the absence of a national policy addressing the needs and concerns of women, would prove to be a problem in various stages of implementation.<sup>72</sup>

#### **Obstacles in Implementation: Land Transfer Program**

There were substantial delays and administrative problems in the implementation of intermediate-term reintegration programs. Obstacles for participants

included a lack of immediate access to credit, a lack of quality housing, little experience with finances, and lack of agricultural knowledge due to participation in the lengthy conflict. Among other challenges were low levels of education, poor water quality, a lack of electricity and infrastructure in rural areas, and a poor economy.<sup>73</sup>

The land transfer program, Programa de Transferencia de Tierras (PTT), was at the heart of reintegration and reconstruction efforts. It was a response to the need for a more equitable distribution of resources and better living conditions for the millions of poor in El Salvador, the majority of whom lived in rural areas. It was also important because it was the main instrument for ensuring the resettlement of ex-combatants in rural areas and because it had a particularly large number of recipients. The Chapultepec accords listed 47,500 people as beneficiaries of the PTT: 15,000 were demobilized soldiers of the FAES; 7,500 were FMLN *ex-combatientes*; and 25,000 were FMLN supporters occupying land in conflict-affected areas (*tenedores*).<sup>74</sup> The program contained provisions for land acquisition, training, technical assistance, and credit.<sup>75</sup>

Intense negotiations at every stage, along with substantial delays, led to reductions in the numbers qualifying and applying for the program. A 1997 Arias Foundation report indicates that, ultimately, 36,185 of 36,551 agreed-upon beneficiaries received land in some form (see Table 2). Perhaps most significantly, non-combatants represented a majority (approximately 21,998) of the beneficiaries.<sup>76</sup>

**Table 2: Numbers of Beneficiaries of the Land Transfer Program (PTT)**

Target Number of FMLN Beneficiaries	Target Number of FAES Beneficiaries	1997 Actual FMLN Beneficiaries	1997 Actual FAES Beneficiaries
28,421	8,130	28,137	8,048

Source: Arias Foundation<sup>77</sup>

An estimated one-third of total PTT beneficiaries were women.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, they experienced widespread discrimination, particularly in the initial stages of land transfer.<sup>79</sup> Across the socio-economic divide, women in rural and urban areas continue to insist that they were marginalized in a variety of ways, including through:<sup>80</sup>

- classification (by those from the FMLN in charge of producing beneficiary lists) into categories that would not allow them access to reintegration benefits;<sup>81</sup>
- assignment of land by local bureaucrats to family groups or to husbands, particularly among *tenedores*, despite the existence of guidelines explicitly assigning land to individuals;<sup>82</sup>
- distribution of poor quality land;<sup>83</sup> and
- additional criteria, such as literacy and documentation, required for land entitlement and to secure loans (women were over-represented among the illiterate and those without adequate documents).<sup>84</sup>

The difficult conditions faced by female *ex-combatientes* and *tenedoras* were highlighted by documentation and reports from newly mobilized women's organizations, leading to protest from women leaders at decision-making levels.<sup>86</sup> Some problems were corrected in ongoing negotiations concerning the number of land beneficiaries, and some through direct intervention by women's organizations, particularly those at the local level using their connections with local politicians.<sup>87</sup> Thus, as demonstrated by 1996 official figures, women eventually did receive land in numbers proportional to their participation in the FMLN and in the DDR process (see Table 3). It is important to note, however, that data does not address the additional layers of discrimination encountered after land distribution.

Women worldwide often face both structural and attitudinal barriers to their full participation in all aspects of society. With the inclusion of women in the formal DDR process in El Salvador, structural barriers were overcome—an extraordinary feat. But discrimination was encountered on other levels, as demonstrated by the problems in the land transfer program. Women's access to reintegration benefits was, therefore, not an unqualified success but a strong attempt to create an inclusive and sustainable program.

**Table 3: Gender Distribution of FMLN Beneficiaries of the Land Transfer Program (PTT) as of 1996**

Ex-combatant Men	Ex-combatant Women	<i>Tenedores</i> Men	<i>Tenedoras</i> Women
3,160	1,122	9,449	5,203

Source: Land Bank<sup>85</sup>

## **PART 2: WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO REINTEGRATION AND RECONSTRUCTION**

The war had a devastating effect on El Salvador. In 12 years, 80,000 were killed, half a million were displaced internally, and over a million were in exile.<sup>88</sup> The peace agreement transformed life for Salvadorans. It shifted the struggle for change from a military to a political process, and it provided a vehicle for the people to secure their civil and political rights. It also served to dismantle a repressive and militarized state apparatus and enabled people to return to relatively stable lives.

Many obstacles stood in the way of successful reintegration. Poverty was a major concern, as the 1994 real GDP level remained below that of 1970.<sup>89</sup> Rural to urban migration, as well as emigration, continued to impact society and the economy.<sup>90</sup> Crime and violence had increased, despite the end of the war. In fact, in 1995 the office of the attorney general reported an average of 21 homicides per day; the average during the war was 17.<sup>91</sup> Challenges and obstacles remained, but the path and plans for peace and stability had been firmly set.

### **Women's Roles in Reintegration**

#### ***Women's Sacrifice for Post-Conflict Stabilization***

At the time of the accords, war fatigue was widespread. Many FMLN fighters and supporters were ready to settle into a peaceful life, despite continued economic hardships. The return to civilian life was not an easy transition, particularly for women combatants. "Our society is hugely *machista* and patriarchal,"

writes a Salvadoran United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative conducting a study of female ex-combatants in El Salvador. "That means women ex-combatants are under pressure to fulfill their stereotypical role..."<sup>92</sup> Thus, whereas men were often regarded as heroes by their communities for their participation in the war, women combatants were not always as easily accepted. In a 1993 survey by the F-16, some women reported that they were treated as outcasts by family members.<sup>93d</sup>



**Woman cooking for combatants assembled for demobilization in Ciudadela Guillermo Manuel Ungo; photo courtesy of César Erazo**

The pressure to conform had a significant effect. In the same survey, 95 percent responded that they worked in the home after the war.<sup>94</sup> Many women wanted to fulfill their role as mothers, but in reality, few had other choices. Among the demobilized, an estimated 80 percent had children younger than 12 years old in their care, and nearly 29 percent headed households after the war.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that they returned to traditional roles, performing domestic labor while caring for their children, traumatized family members, the many disabled, and the elderly. In addition to their domestic responsibilities, women took on community reconstruction efforts, including physical construction and agricultural work (irrigation, harvesting, and storing produce).<sup>96</sup>

In some areas, training programs in topics such as soil conservation and fertilization were offered as part of the benefits packages, but with little practical support, such as childcare, the majority of women could not participate effectively. Many even declined opportunities to participate in scholarship programs and workshops, deferring to their husbands and companions. A 1999 Oxfam-funded survey of rural women explains, "The

<sup>d</sup>The F-16 survey consisted of a questionnaire completed by 1,100 former women combatants. It has a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 1.1 percent.

distrust of their husbands or life partners and their fear that the women might develop and decide for themselves were the most recurrent phrases to explain why women were not given permission nor space to participate...<sup>97c</sup> Drawing on research conducted by Las Dignas, economist Sarah Gammage also notes that, "The failure to accommodate...shifting gender roles in the return to peace has led to profound disaffection on the part of many of these women and for many has meant that their active participation...has been stifled and discouraged."<sup>98</sup>

Among those who attempted to participate in public life, some recall ridicule, criticism, and a lack of recognition of their abilities. Other women retreated, as they were unable to face the double burden of domestic and public responsibilities. As in many post-conflict countries, domestic violence was also on the rise.<sup>99</sup>

Even in their return to the private sphere, women played a critical but often unacknowledged role in sustaining the reintegration process, particularly in rural areas. Today, both men and women recognize that this sacrifice contributed to the peace and stabilization of their homes and communities. "I just think of [the men] working with machetes and working all day, but... they know that they have their children and wife there, waiting for him,"<sup>100</sup> recalls one woman in Sisiguayo, Usulután, commenting on the important supportive role that women play in the home. Many former FMLN members say that nightmares about the war continue even today, adding that it took them five to six years to feel safe and settled in civilian life.<sup>101</sup>

Despite the general social regression of women, their leadership roles and experiences during the war had exposed them to new possibilities. Thus, even in the face of constraints, many were no longer content to work exclusively in the home. Describing this transformation, Ana María Alvarenga of the Asociación para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Municipal (ARDM) in Cinquera, Cabañas, says:

*After the war, women have never returned to be the same and to live in the same conditions as they were before. Their situation has changed. Yes, they do their household chores, but they are never absorbed only in this. There is another vision. They are participating in other activities and in community activities; women participate in groups and solidarity organizations... Their work is valued.<sup>102</sup>*

### Shifting Gender Roles

In some communities today, gender roles have expanded for both men and women. In a 1999 survey conducted by the Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP) of the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas,"<sup>f</sup> 17.8 percent of women responded that both men and women were responsible for housework, and 32.5 percent of men felt the same way.<sup>103</sup> In focus groups, men in Suchitoto, Cuscatlán, said that the experience of witnessing and working with women as equals during the war was an important lesson for them, challenging their assumptions about women and, in particular, how they perceived women's skills. Consequently, their own perceptions of women's roles in society and how women can contribute substantively to the well being of the community have changed dramatically.<sup>104</sup> As one former combatant in Sisiguayo, Usulután, said:

*Here, all of the former guerilla women were involved [after reinsertion]; together, we had to do everything. So, we produced salt, we pruned trees with a machete... There were many compañeras who, with their leadership experience, also assumed responsibilities to direct some units of production... The men of Sisiguayo cannot say: 'We have done all this,' because it would be a lie.<sup>105</sup>*

Another man in the same community observed that men's roles and responsibilities have changed as well: "I know many *compañeros* here that were [in the war]; sometimes we are chatting, really, we are making jokes, that today I made tortillas and I had to do the laundry. But I tell you, it's true... So, there are some things that have changed that before we would not do..."<sup>106</sup>

<sup>c</sup>From rural regions across El Salvador, 127 women were interviewed. Of those, 38 percent were leaders of women's organizations; 43 percent were members of women's organizations; and 35 percent were women who did not participate in organizations. In terms of their history, some were displaced; some were combatants; some were formally reintegrated, and some were not.

<sup>f</sup>The survey was conducted through individual interviews across El Salvador with 1,251 participants and a margin of error of +/- .04. Of the total respondents, 48.4 percent were men and 51.6 percent were women. The average for years of schooling was 7.76, and 56.8 percent of respondents stated that they were formally employed



Partly as a result of this change in gender roles, women have begun to seek work outside of the home. In the 1993 F-16 survey of 1,100 women ex-combatants, 239 (19.6 percent) reported having paid employment. Of the 239, 32 worked in the “political” arena, 29 worked in NGOs, 25 worked in the agriculture and fishing industries, and 22 worked as clerks and secretaries.<sup>107</sup>

### Women as Actors in Reconstruction

As gender roles continue to shift, women have begun to attend municipal meetings and participate on cooperative boards and in local government.<sup>108</sup> Nicolasa, an FMLN *colaboradora*, describes the change quite simply:

*[The situation] has changed and is very different. The women are not as timid; that is to say, they have a new sense of worth. It is not like before when the men would scold us and we said nothing. Today...the two are in charge and discuss to get along well. If one goes to a meeting, they tell the other and vice versa.*<sup>109</sup>

Although the extent to which women are active continues to vary by community and remains dependent upon the “permission” of male leadership, women are entering the public sphere in both FMLN and FAES reintegrated areas.<sup>110</sup> In the IUDOP survey mentioned above, 15.7 percent of women responded that they had participated in a community or municipal meeting, and 24.3 percent of men answered in the same way.<sup>111</sup> When asked how many hours per week they could devote to an organization, 7 percent of women and 10.7 percent of men responded three hours or more; 1.2 percent of women and 1.7 percent of men responded more than 10 hours.<sup>112</sup>

### Women’s Organizations

In addition to their participation in general community activities, women have committed to women’s organizations. Some structures existed before the war and are being revitalized; others formed in the post-war context. In 1991, more than 100 women’s organizations were active in El Salvador.<sup>113</sup> As noted by a 2000 USAID report, “The peace process resulted in significantly lower levels of open oppres-

sion and created room for women’s organizations to form a new path—that of working both with opposition sectors and agencies of the government.”<sup>114</sup>

On the national level, organizations such as the Association of Rural Women, Cemujer, El Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación, y Desarrollo de la Mujer (IMU), Las Dignas, and Las Mélicas have emerged as well-respected and highly organized groups. Sonia Baires, president of the board of Las Dignas,<sup>g</sup> and Ana Murcia, the former executive director of the organization, note that women’s organizations have led efforts in rehabilitation and stabilization in their homes and communities, raised the visibility of women through documentation of their experiences, and pushed women forward into political positions.<sup>115</sup> In addition, women’s organizations have advocated with relative success on land issues, provided much-needed educational and psychosocial programs, ensured a degree of women’s participation at municipal and state levels, and helped put in place important legislation safeguarding women’s rights.<sup>116</sup>

At the grassroots level in some areas, women’s groups are building upon and making strategic use of organizational structures and strategies set in place by the FMLN during and prior to the war. These connections provide a means to mobilize and participate in reintegration and reconstruction efforts.<sup>117</sup> The emergence of women’s organizations has, in fact, led to the redressing of some implementation problems and gaps in the reintegration process for both men and women. In response to endless needs, women’s groups developed a range of practical projects that targeted the most disadvantaged groups.<sup>118</sup> Although the programs were small-scale, the sheer number of initiatives and their existence in communities otherwise difficult to reach enabled broad coverage of the population. Program areas included health, occupational training, education, micro credit, and enterprise. With regard to health programs, women’s organizations have begun “innovative work” in the prevention, detection, and treatment of HIV/AIDS.<sup>119</sup>

In programs on occupational training and income generation, they promoted entrepreneurship and held workshops for women in traditionally male-dominated

<sup>g</sup>Las Dignas has shown remarkable capacity for documenting and publishing the needs and concerns of women in post-war El Salvador. Several Las Dignas reports can be found in the bibliography of this study.

trades. USAID offers this example: "...Las Dignas at one point designed a series of training programs for women in carpentry, masonry, and auto mechanics. The group recruited low-income women and single mothers, provided stipends and child care in addition to occupational training, emotional support, and weekly workshops on gender issues."<sup>120</sup> Women's organizations have a particularly long history with regard to literacy programs, many of which began during the war when there was no public schooling. In 1997, just one of these groups—Movimiento de Mujeres (MAM)—had 92 educational programs in 38 municipalities in 12 *departamentos* throughout the country.<sup>121</sup>

Manuel Ortega, president of the Committee for Reconstruction and Economic and Social Development of the Communities of Suchitoto (CRC) in Cuscatlán, is acutely aware of women's importance as members of community-based organizations that actively contribute to the CRC:

*Women demonstrate their commitment daily in the way they undertake their community activities. They have contributed to developing and strengthening the organizational base in their communities. Addressing women and women's needs has allowed this spirit of collective work to be revived—this has maintained the community organizations that sustain our base.*<sup>122</sup>

The success of many of the initiatives of women's groups can be attributed not only to the strength of women's community-based organizations, but also to their strategic use of links forged during the conflict period. Maintaining ties with international NGOs and national women's groups has proven essential for women's organizing strategies in their communities, helping generate additional resources and providing access to training and education.

A 1998 USAID report from its mission in San Salvador highlighted the important role that NGOs played in reinsertion and reintegration activities: "The use of NGOs as executing institutions greatly facilitated the implementation of the [National

Reconstruction Plan] and was essential for providing access to program services by the target population, a large percentage of which is located in remote, war-torn areas."<sup>123</sup> For example, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, funded in part by USAID, worked with the Asociación de Mujeres Salvadoreñas as one of several NGOs implementing its health programs with rural populations.<sup>124</sup> Importantly, civil society organizations employed many Salvadorans in the post-war period, providing training grounds for women who later moved into leadership positions at local and national levels.

#### **Why Women Became Active**

Most local women leaders in former conflict zones have had strong ties to the FMLN or identify themselves as having been directly affected by the war—as a member of a displaced or repopulated community, a repatriated refugee, one of the formally demobilized, or a former combatant.<sup>125</sup> For many women, it was precisely their experience of the war that galvanized their action and agency. Maria Mercedes Menjivar, vice president of the CRC in Cuscatlán, observes:

*The war was very cruel. But it was also a school, one that none of us would have wanted and that left us with many painful memories, but one that also left us with experiences that made us grow. The very fact of living the hardest part of the war awoke in me the need to work in women's leadership and organizing women.*<sup>126h</sup>

According to a 2000 Oxfam-funded study, women list several reasons for their post-war participation in organized activities:

- the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge that would advance their situation and that of their families;
- the possibility to work with other women to support and improve their lives and experiences; and
- an "interest and conviction" in the necessity of actively participating in the lives of their communities.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>h</sup>This interview was conducted for the Center for Development and Population Activities as part of an evaluation of their Women's Leadership Program activities in Central America. For more information, please refer to <http://www.cedpa.org/projects/wlp.html>.

*In Focus: Bajo Lempa, San Vicente and Usulután*

The Bajo Lempa communities in San Vicente and Usulután were formed primarily by displaced and former combatant populations during repatriation. As a result of particular geographic and hydrological conditions, these communities are vulnerable to flooding, waterlogging, erosion, and siltation. With Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the losses incurred in the Bajo Lempa region accounted for more than 65 percent of the total estimated loss to agriculture incurred throughout the country.<sup>a</sup> In addition, the communities have suffered extensive damage from recent earthquakes. The Economic Commission on Latin America calculated the cost at \$1,530 per resident in San Vicente and \$534 per resident in Usulután.<sup>b</sup>

The consequences of Hurricane Mitch and earthquakes were dire, but they galvanized community organization and action. Men and women both participated in the recovery efforts in Bajo Lempa, but women assumed prominent roles in the community action and emergency response committees. A female resident elaborates:

*As women, we are more attached. When the floods come, we are always concerned about the things that we have in the house. We are anxious about the children's toys, we want to save everything. Men are more detached; they aren't so worried about things, they just put on their clothes and go.... and if we are lucky they'll remember the kids (laughter). Women are aware of everything and responsible for everything.<sup>c</sup>*

These communities are in dialogue with the power company and with the government to demand that levees and adequate drainage be built to protect their communities downstream. But in the meantime, women express concern that they cannot retreat from action. "We cannot demand that the government comes back and rebuilds it. It will be just the same. We have to mend the levees ourselves."<sup>d</sup>

Men among the community leadership recognize and value the increasing importance of women in community organizing and activities. Arnoldo García Cruz, president of the Community Organization for Developing an Economic and Social System in the Bajo Lempa, confirms that women are entering into community activities: "Women are assuming a leading role in community activities; they are undertaking work in the church, the school, supporting social and economic development projects that they themselves are executing in the community."<sup>e</sup>

The women have developed ingenious ways to balance their many responsibilities. Collectively, they have organized an informal system of guarderías, or child-care, so that they may attend community meetings or participate in the levee maintenance activities. Child-care responsibilities are rotated so that all members can participate, and those that stay behind to care for the children are kept fully informed of meeting outcomes. Furthermore, those attending the meetings are charged with representing those who stay behind.

<sup>a</sup> Ibarra, A. T. La Tormenta Tropical Mitch en El Salvador: Valoraciones Socio-Ambientales del Desastre. San Salvador: Fundación Heinrich Böll, 1999.

<sup>b</sup> Centro de Estudios Ambientales y Sociales para el Desarrollo Sostenible. "Plan Integral de Mantenimiento de la Infraestructura de Protección del Bajo Lempa," study for the Fundación SHARE and Global Village Engineers in collaboration with the Comité de Seguimiento y Control de Calidad a la Infraestructura de Protección en el Bajo Lempa. San Salvador: CEASDES, 2002.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid.

The study concludes: "Rural women conceive of their organizing experience as a mechanism that, in the short or the long term, will permit them to access opportunities to better their life situation, satisfying their basic needs as well as their strategic interests."<sup>128</sup> For example, a *campesina* who did not receive reintegration benefits is now taking steps on her own to better her position and that of other women. "I am teaching myself about gender theory so that I can pass on the knowledge to other women," she says, "to show them that there are always options, and that to advance we must prepare and fight together."<sup>129</sup>

Regardless of the origin of women's increasing participation in the public sphere in rural areas and the distinct push-and-pull factors that have led them to assume greater visibility in community activities, such engagement can be empowering. Undoubtedly, the extent to which real power and authority is ceded to women through their community activities and participation varies and depends upon the location and history of organizing in each locality.

#### **Women's Prominence and Commitment**

One noteworthy result of the war was the increased number of women heading households. While some were widowed, others have separated from their partners or chosen to remain single.

According to the 2000 Oxfam-funded study, women leaders in rural areas are more likely to fall into one of the categories of single, separated, or widowed.<sup>130</sup> Migration also continues to change the composition of households and communities in El Salvador: Approximately 58 percent of urban households and 32 percent of rural households with migrants are female-headed.<sup>131</sup> Communities with high emigration levels are becoming increasingly feminized, and women's community participation is beginning to reflect this phenomenon.

Women in some communities confirm that they do much of the community work, and that men are progressively more absent. "Oh, it is all women who work here," said one focus group participant in Bajo Lempa. Women are taking the lead in community maintenance and upkeep of basic infrastructure, social

networking and coordinating among community organizations, planning and preparation for communal events, and non-formal education and health services. But as women take on these roles, they are also taking on organizational and planning functions, managing funds, and beginning to exercise strategic power to influence the choice of activities undertaken.<sup>132</sup>

Women feel intense pride at having entered and taken their place in the public sphere. "A significant percentage of women have raised their heads and improved their quality of life..." states one focus group participant.<sup>133</sup> Women have their sights firmly set on reconstruction goals, as explained by a woman in the Bajo Lempa: "We are working together because we have to develop projects and finance them so that we have in our hands the means to help our community."<sup>134</sup>

Official and non-governmental community leaders are becoming more aware that women are leading reconstruction efforts and are refocusing their missions as their constituency and membership shifts.<sup>135</sup> Pedro Fuentes, vice president of Asociación para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Municipal (ARDM), confirms both the strong role that women have played in leadership structures and associations in his community of Cinquera, Cabañas and the importance of supporting them in these efforts:

*Women are participating in social and community activities. A smaller percentage of men also participate. Women are in the ADESCOS and in the Municipal Council. In these positions, women are making decisions. But I am also convinced that we must continue to work to ensure that more women hold more decision-making positions—not just because the exercise of power raises self-esteem, but also because this will contribute [to the betterment of the community].*<sup>136</sup>

Ana Maria Alvarenga from the ARDM confirms the need for real investment in women's leadership from within the communities as well as from donors. She explains:

<sup>128</sup>This compares to the following national averages for female-headed households: 30 percent in urban areas and 22 percent in rural areas.



**Las Dignas poster encouraging women's leadership; courtesy of Las Dignas<sup>137</sup>**

*To improve the quality of life of women, and to ensure that they can earn a living, it is particularly important that institutions and organizations that develop projects place requirements for the approval of projects on the equitable participation of men and women in these projects and activities.<sup>138</sup>*

There is ample evidence that women in former conflict zones are active participants in the public sphere—both productively and in community leadership. Women are using these opportunities strategically to protect their interests, advocate for their rights, and forge and re-negotiate social and political space. They are seeking to improve their situation and that of the community. Proud of these gains, women attest to real individual and community benefits resulting from their participation and activism.

#### ***The International Community as a Catalyst***

While this report has not focused on the interaction between the international and local communities, it is important to note that the commitment of internationals was integral to the post-conflict reconstruction of El Salvador. In addition to the various United Nations missions and agencies, donor governments included the United States, Canada, the European Union, and Japan. Multilateral organizations such as the World Bank were also active, as were humanitarian organizations, such as Oxfam. These third party organizations funded and conducted a variety of reintegration programs in urban and rural areas, ranging from training in agricultural techniques to the construction of housing and the provision of credit. In many cases, in part because much of the target population was located in remote areas, non-governmental organizations were contracted as implementers.

For a variety of reasons, there are communities that did not receive adequate support, while others benefited from international and national assistance. In Sisiguayo, Usulután, for example, residents speak of the support they received, name the European Union as one of the funders, and discuss how vital that assistance has been to their survival and prosperity.<sup>139</sup>

The impact that international and national support had with regard to women's potential is striking. Among communities that received more sustained assistance in the form of training and skills building, such as the departamento of Usulután, women are rising as leaders in the reconstruction process. For example, women in Jiquilisco have joined to seek out and advocate for microcredit support in their community.<sup>140</sup> Women in the Bajo Lempa have formed a cooperative of women livestock owners and have developed a small rotating credit fund.<sup>141</sup> And in Sisiguayo, Usulután, women have come together to operate a shrimp farm.<sup>142</sup>

In the Bahía de Jiquilisco, Usulután, another group of women has organized a fishing cooperative, Las Gaviotas, which primarily comprises demobilized female combatants who sought and obtained funding from a variety of donors and now operate a vibrant enterprise that generates income for their membership.<sup>143</sup> Margarita Escobar, permanent representative of El Salvador to the Organization of American States, recalled visiting the Bahía de Jiquilisco in 2002, where, through a program supported by the Japanese government, men in the community rent boats and motors owned by the women's cooperative. Ambassador Escobar noted that many of the women in this community are former combatants and that this area of the country was a "zone of misery, but is now breathing, re-awakening."<sup>144</sup>

<sup>137</sup>The ADESCOS are the Associations for Community Development.

***In Focus: Cinquera, Cabañas***

In the municipality of Cinquera in Cabañas, women play a leading role in the Asociación para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Municipal (ARDM). Formed by the repopulated communities returning to Cinquera at the end of the war, ARDM is a local non-governmental association dedicated to reconstruction and municipal development. Leadership is largely composed of former combatants.

The ARDM came into existence to represent the concerns and needs of a particularly vulnerable group of returnees: small rural farmers and ex-combatants who received land as part of the land transfer program. This group received land that encompasses the Bosque de Cinquera in Cabañas. It is an area provides habitat for a number of threatened species and serves as a critical watershed for the surrounding agricultural lands, securing vital ecological functions. The lands that these ex-combatants and *tenedores* received as part of their reintegration package comprise poor clay and sandy soils best devoted to perennial vegetation and forest cover. Since the soils are poor and the yields low, some farmers have found themselves under incremental pressure to sell their land to loggers and cattle ranchers.

The ARDM have purchased land to preserve the forest and the fauna and flora that the forest secures. At the time of publication, the forest had not yet been declared a national reserve, but the ARDM manages it privately, generating in excess of \$50,000 for upkeep and the purchase of additional land.<sup>a</sup> To date they have secured more than 70 hectares of forest in the Bosque de Cinquera<sup>b</sup>

Women are vital members and committed participants in the ARDM. As Pedro Fuentes, vice president of the ARDM, observes: “The majority of women who were active during the war have maintained their spirit of work and commitment.”<sup>c</sup> Four of the seven elected executive committee members are women and one of the two full-time forest guards (retained and paid for by the ARDM) is a woman.

Among the 170 current members, women are most prominent at meetings and events. They have also drawn on the organization’s structure to meet their needs and concerns. Under its auspices, women members have been able to organize artisan workshops to develop and market crafts and artisan products. They have also formed an association that exchanges information about medicinal herbs and plants and practices traditional therapies.

<sup>a</sup>De Bremond, Ariane. “Reconstructing Lives and Landscapes: Environmental Governance, Land Policy and Rural Landscape Change in post-war El Salvador.” Latin American Studies Association Convention, Dallas, Texas, USA. 27-29 March 2003.

<sup>b</sup>Ibid.

<sup>c</sup>Fuentes, Pedro. Personal interview with Sarah Gammage. May 2003.

## CONCLUSION

For women in the FMLN, as well as for men, the war in El Salvador was primarily a struggle for democracy and liberation from a highly oppressive and militarized regime. In spite of the risks and challenges women faced every day, the war gave them an opportunity to broaden their horizons, acquire new skills and knowledge, and focus their attention on the survival and improved future of their children. The success of El Salvador's peace process and DDR efforts is, in many ways, the result of women being present in negotiations, active in implementing official programs and civil society initiatives, and providing the support needed to sustain the long-term processes of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

During the negotiations, women participated as representatives of the government and the armed opposition, influencing outcomes in several ways. First, the women negotiators did not enter the peace talks with a specific "women's rights" or "gender awareness" agenda; but when women's groups alerted them to the fact that women were being excluded from reintegration packages, they rectified the situation, securing equal access to benefits. Second, women had a clear sense of responsibility for the livelihood of thousands of FMLN supporters and sought to ensure their well-being. A result was that the majority of land beneficiaries were non-combatants, which is particularly remarkable and specific to the Salvadoran process. Third, even the most marginalized and vulnerable, such as female-headed households, were recognized and received some support. This spread of benefits had a significant impact on the sustainability of the reintegration and reconstruction process.

The immediate post-war transition was difficult for many women who had dedicated their lives to the FMLN. Social pressures, war fatigue, and the lack of systematic support ultimately pressed many to sacrifice their own ambitions and step back into traditional roles. This left the public and productive sphere open to male ex-combatants, giving them responsibilities and much needed self-esteem—critical to their reintegration and the success of the peace process.

Yet this sacrifice came at a cost not only to women, but also to Salvadoran society more broadly. Many

gained skills during the war that would have been beneficial to post-war reconstruction. But the official DDR process was not equipped to realize this potential. Leading women FMLN *ex-combatientes* and *tenedoras* initiated many efforts to redress the gaps and weaknesses of the reintegration program. In the years that followed, women have emerged at the forefront of reconstruction and long-term development processes in a number of urban and rural settings, but they are the exception rather than the rule. A more concerted effort to tap this potential could have enhanced existing social capital in the country, facilitating more successful reconstruction and development.

Despite substantial evidence in El Salvador of women's actual contributions to post-war reintegration and reconstruction, in general there has been limited acknowledgment or support for their efforts. In the few communities where women were supported through training, they have shown their commitment to leadership and development. With more access to and opportunities for capacity building, leadership training, and education for women, the country could be dramatically different today. They represent immense social capital and are indicative of the untapped potential of women across the country. No society struggling to emerge from war can afford to ignore such resources.

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**APPENDIX 1: MAP OF EL SALVADOR**



## **APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF SPANISH TERMS**

<i>Campeños, campesinas</i> (only women)	Rural men and women
<i>Colaboradores, colaboradoras</i> (only women)	Collaborators
<i>Combatiente, ex-combatiente</i>	Combatant, former combatant
<i>Comandante, ex-comandante</i>	Commander, former commander
<i>Compañeros, compañeras</i> (only women)	Partners
<i>Departamentos</i>	Provinces
<i>Inserción agropecuaria</i>	Rural reintegration program (direct translation: agro-fishing insertion)
<i>Inserción en industria y servicio</i>	Urban reintegration program (direct translation: industrial and service insertion)
<i>Machista</i>	Patriarchal or male-dominated
<i>Sanitarias</i>	Medical technicians
<i>Tenedores, tenedoras</i> (only women)	Non-combatant FMLN supporters and internally displaced people in conflict-affected areas

### **APPENDIX 3: LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADESCOS	Associations for Community Development
ARDM	Asociación para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Municipal
ARENA	Nationalist Republican Alliance
BIRI	Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions
CEASDES	Centro de Estudios Ambientales y Sociales para el Desarrollo Sostenible
CRC	Committee for Reconstruction and Economic and Social Development of the Communities of Suchitoto
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and rehabilitation
F-16	Fundación 16 de Enero
FAES	Armed Forces of El Salvador
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
Funsalprodese	Fundación Salvadoreña para la Promoción y el Desarrollo Económico
GDP	Gross domestic product
IMU	Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación, y Desarrollo de la Mujer
IUDOP	Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública of the Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas
MAM	Movimiento de Mujeres
NGO	Non-government organization
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
PNC	National Civilian Police
PRN	National Reconstruction Plan
PTT	Programa de Transferencia de Tierras
SRN	Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



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### **About Women Waging Peace**

Women Waging Peace, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world. Over 200 members of the “Waging” network, all demonstrated leaders with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process. They have met with over 1000 senior policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts.

### **About The Policy Commission**

The Policy Commission is conducting a series of case studies to document women’s contributions to peace processes across conflict areas worldwide. The studies focus on women’s activities in conflict prevention, pre-negotiation and negotiation, and post-conflict reconstruction—including governance; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and transitional justice and reconciliation. This body of work is pragmatic and operational, offering suggestions, guidelines, and models to encourage policymakers to include women and gender perspectives in their program designs.

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