



Centre for  
International Cooperation  
and Security

## **Desk Review**

# **Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Human Security in El Salvador**

*July 2008*

*Contribution to the Project:*

**DDR and Human Security: Post-Conflict Security-Building  
and the Interests of the Poor**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
BRADFORD**  
MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

# EL SALVADOR

## 1. The DDR Programme

### 1.1 The Conflict Context

El Salvador endured a 12-year civil conflict beginning in 1981 that was waged between the US backed Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES), paramilitary groups sponsored by the state and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) an umbrella group of four left wing organizations and the Salvadoran Communist Party. Women combatants represented an estimated 30% of FMLN fighting forces and 40% of *tenedores* (non-combatant FMLN supporters).<sup>1</sup> The conflict was the culmination of long-standing inequities and marginalisation in Salvadoran society, combined with decades of repression, military control and political violence.

Out of a population of 6 million, 80 000 people were killed, half a million were internally displaced and 1 million went into exile. The conflict was ended through a negotiated settlement brokered by the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> Factors decisive in bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiating table included: a) active and persistent engagement by the UN; b) stalemate in the conflict; c) a change in the US position – away from support to the repressive counter insurgency tactics of the El Salvador military - and pressure from the State Department on the FAES to negotiate.<sup>3</sup>

Peace negotiations were protracted and complex.<sup>4</sup> Five preliminary agreements were realised between April 1990 and September 1991 (the Geneva Agreement; the Caracas Agreement; the San Jose Agreement; the Mexico Agreements; and the New

---

<sup>1</sup> Fundación 16 de Enero and the UN Children's Fund, *Diagnostico de la Situación Actual de ala Mujer Excombatiente* (San Salvador: PACT, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> See T. S. Montgomery (1995) 'Getting to peace in El Salvador: The roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Winter.

<sup>3</sup> T. Karl (1992) 'El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2 (Spring), pp. 147-64.

<sup>4</sup> See T. S. Montgomery (1995) 'Getting to peace in El Salvador: The roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL', *ibid.*

York Agreement) ahead of the comprehensive Chapultepec peace accord of January 1992 that was signed in Mexico.

The San Jose Agreement of July 1990 produced a ceasefire, the legalisation of the FMLN, and constitutional reforms that included proposals to create a national police force independent of the military, abolish existing security forces, reform the judicial system, create a new electoral tribunal, and establish a Truth Commission to investigate human rights violations committed during the war. This accord led to the creation of the UN Observation Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), which had responsibility for verifying and monitoring human rights violations. The New York agreement set up an Ad Hoc Commission to review the human rights record of all top military officers, and the FMLN pledged the complete demobilisation of its army.

### **Box 1: Peace Accords**

**The Chapultepec Agreement:** established the structural and legal conditions for incorporating the FMLN and its supporters into the nation's political process.

- It consolidated the previous 5 agreements;
- Set out a series of timetables and processes for the ceasefire;
- Addressed seven key areas: National Civilian Police, the judicial system, the electoral system; economic and social issues; political participation by the FMLN; cessation of the armed conflict.
- Elaborated detailed plans for disarmament and demobilisation. The agreement mandated the dissolution of the National Police and the creation of a new National Civil Police (60% civilian, 20% former FMLN and 20% former state police), dissolution of the Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions, paramilitary groups and civil defence units; the removal of police intelligence functions from the military command structure; the disbanding of the FMLN and its transformation into a civilian political organisation with UN verification of these activities.
- Provided an 'overarching' framework for reintegration;
- Mandated the distribution of land to 45,000 beneficiaries.

## **1.2 The DDR Programme**

### ***Disarmament and demobilisation***

As a foundation for the disarmament process, the FAES and FMLN submitted to ONASUL information relating to troop strength and weaponry prior to the ceasefire of February 1992. The Legislative Assembly contributed to stabilising the DDR process by passing a national reconciliation law granting a broad amnesty for political crimes. Following the ceasefire, the FAES were assembled in 100 designated centres and the FMLN into 50, in preparation for disarmament. These were subsequently consolidated, with the FAES into 62 verification centres and the FMLN into 15.

Disarmament and demobilisation proceeded on the basis of five 20% reductions in FMLN capacity, starting May 1992 moving to 100% D and D by October 1992. This was overseen by the military division of ONASUL. All inventories were stored in lockers and FMLN combatants were permitted to retain personal weapons while in cantonment. The demobilisation of the armed forces was structured around the FMLN compliance schedule. Underscoring the broad base of the D and D process, those eligible for disarmament and demobilisation included non-armed *tenedores*.

The disarmament and demobilisation process was contentious and subject to frequent delay owing to the lack of trust between the FAES and FMLN; FAES reluctance to relinquish its political influence, and problems in the land distribution programme. Moreover, two security bodies that were to be dissolved, the Treasury Police and the National Guard were retained by the Cristiani government and reconstituted as the Military Police and the Frontier Guards respectively. This forced repeated rescheduling, and mediation by the UN through Murrack Goulding, Under Secretary General for Peace-Keeping Operations, and pressure on the FAES from General Colin Powell, dispatched to San Salvador by President Bush. FMLN demobilisation was completed in December 1992, while the restructuring of the armed forces was completed in March 1993. Although the Security Forces were formally abolished in June 1992, an unspecified number were incorporated into the army, the National Police (disbanded late 1994) and the training academy of the new Civil Police Force. This was a violation of the Peace Agreement and it prevented demilitarisation and de-politicisation of policing and security functions.<sup>5</sup> The Civil Police force was under-

---

<sup>5</sup> L. O'Shaughnessy and M. Dodson (1999) 'Political Bargaining and Democratic Transitions : A Comparison of Nicaragua and El Salvador', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 31.

funded by the national government and resources intended for the new institution were blocked and absorbed by the armed forces.

Of an estimated 15,000 FMLN combatants reporting for demobilisation, 8,522 were demobilised of which 29% were women (80% of which had children under the age of 12 in their care), in addition to a further 6,450 ‘political personnel’ and injured non-combatants. 30,000 of the 60,000 FAES soldiers were demobilised. Of the remaining 30,000, none were women. The destruction of FMLN weapons began December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1992, while the weapons of the 30,000 FAES troops were collected and stored.

### Box 2: Demobilisation Statistics

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>

Over 11,000 guerrillas surrendered more than 10,000 weapons, 74 missiles and 9,000 grenades. By 15 December 1992, approximately 93% of declared FMLN weapons had been collected and 47% had been destroyed.

### Box 3: Weapons Collected by ONUSAL 1992-93

Pistols	411
Assault rifles	8,268
Sub-machine guns	239
Machine guns	271
Grenade launchers	662
Mortars and cannons	379
Missiles	74
Rounds of ammunition	4,032,606
Rockets	140
Grenades (hand, mortar and CN.57)	9,228

Explosives 5,107.1

Source: *United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, 1993*

The Belgian de-mining company Danger and Disaster cleared 6,946 of the 9,553 mines claimed by the FMLN – although the process was criticised for not building local capacity into de-mining activities.<sup>6</sup>

An estimated 1,500 FMLN troops did not turn in their weapons. ONSAUL estimated that 360,000 military-style weapons were left in private hands by the end of the demobilisation and demilitarisation process. In March and April 1993, ONASUL conducted operations in Nicaragua and Honduras amid concerns that the FMLN had maintained weapons stockpiles outside of El Salvador. The discovery of significant weapons caches outside Managua threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the disarmament and demobilisation process, forcing an intervention by Boutros-Ghali and reassurances by FMLN representatives that any future weapons discoveries ‘shall be accounted solely by those persons in whose possession they are found. The FMLN disclaims all responsibility.’<sup>7</sup>

### ***Reintegration***

Reintegration was not addressed in the 1992 peace accord, but it did mandate the government to develop, in cooperation with the FMLN, a National Reconstruction Plan that would include reintegration and address broader socio-economic development questions. This proceeded in three phases and was negotiated by the F-16 (for the FMLN) and the Secretaria de Reconstrucción Nacional (SRN) for the Salvadoran government. Women had a high profile role in these negotiations and one technical table, the 7 person Reinsertion Commission (Comisión de la Reinserción), was composed of 6 women, 3 from the FMLN and 3 representing the FAES and government. Ahead of the Feb 1992 ceasefire, the FMLN provided the government with a list of beneficiaries qualifying for inclusion in reintegration programmes. This included non-combatants, IDPs and *tenedores*.

---

<sup>6</sup> E. Laurance and W. Godnick (2002) *Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala*. Monterey, CA: Monterey Institute of International Studies. Available at [http://sand.miis.edu/research/2000/jan2000/bicc\\_elsgua.pdf](http://sand.miis.edu/research/2000/jan2000/bicc_elsgua.pdf) . Accessed 20/05/2008.

<sup>7</sup> E. Laurance and W. Godnick (2002) *Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala*. *Ibid*.

Phase 1 of the reintegration process (the ‘emergency period’ Feb 1992-Dec 1992) focused on addressing immediate basic needs such as education, housing, food and healthcare. Furniture was also provided in the reinsertion and reintegration package. In Phase 2 (the ‘contingency period’ July 1992-June 1993), the distinct needs of rural and urban resettlement processes were addressed. Key activities in this period included the provision of full documentation for the demobilised; distribution of a package of basic goods (10,657); provision of agricultural supplies (8,779) and credit facilities (1,118) and the convening of workshops to provide support in agricultural (6,232) and industrial (1,597) areas.

Phase 3 (the ‘intermediate-term plan’) was more specialised. Programs introduced in this phase included credit provision and technical assistance to ex-combatants and *tenedores* in agricultural and urban areas (*Inserción Agropecuaria and Inserción en Industria y Servicio*) and secondary school and university scholarship programmes. For mid-level commanders (FMLN and FAES) credit facilities, management and business training were made available.<sup>8</sup> A land transfer programme (*Programa de Transferencia de Tierras, PTT*) that included technical training and credit provision formed the centrepiece of the reconstruction and reintegration programme. Recognition of the need to address underlying structural inequalities underscores an effort at synergising reintegration and human security needs. Under the Chapultepec accord, 47,500 people were cited as beneficiaries of the PTT, of which 15,000 were demobilised FAES soldiers, 7,500 were former FMLN combatants and 25,000 were *tenedores*.

Financing for and assistance to reintegration programmes was provided by multilateral agencies (the UN), donor governments from Europe, Japan and the US, and INGOs that included Oxfam International. Local NGOs were contracted as implementors and this is seen to have facilitated ‘communitisation’ of reintegration efforts and local identification of need, as well as the participation of women in projects.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> C. Conaway; S. Martinez (2004) *Adding value: women's contributions to reintegration and reconstruction in El Salvador*. Women Waging Peace, Cambridge and Washington.

<sup>9</sup> USAID (1997) *Project Assistance Completion Report: Peace and National Recovery*. Project 519-0394. San Salvador: USAID Mission to El Salvador.

The reinsertion and reintegration process did encounter a number of obstacles<sup>10</sup>. Among these were delays in the distribution of credit, technical assistance and the initiation of programmes, and a lack of childcare facilities that would have enabled women to take advantage of the reintegration programmes offered. Under-investment in training and education, posed significant problems given the duration of the conflict and the diminution of basic skills that this implied. The poor quality and the destruction of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas hampered the process, together with an unfavourable macroeconomic environment.

The land distribution programme experienced significant problems. By 1997, 36,551 beneficiaries had received land, of which one third were women and 21,998 were non-combatants.<sup>11</sup> Women were reported to have faced discrimination in the distribution process, owing to: a) assignment of land to husbands, particularly among *tenedores*; b) the distribution of poor quality land to women; c) literacy and documentary requirements that excluded many women. These problems were articulated and largely rectified owing to strong interventions by women's organisations.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Reconstruction and Macro-Economic Profile**

There has been a sustained problem of poverty in El Salvador, through periods of economic growth (1960s and 1990s) and economic crisis (1970s and 1980s). The conflict of the 1980s came at a high economic cost and it exacerbated existing problems of poverty and inequality. The national infrastructure was shattered, particularly in rural areas and there was a high level of emigration out of the country – with around 1 million Salvadorans relocating to the US. Per capita income at the end of the conflict was 70% of pre-conflict levels. Underscoring the economic reversal that was experienced as a result of the conflict, per capita GDP was 20% higher than the median Latin America income in the 1970s. By the 1990s it was 20% lower, with real per capita GDP falling 40% during the first 3 years of the conflict (World Bank, 2002a).

---

<sup>10</sup> C. Roldan, S. Villalona and C. Augusto (1995) *Evaluación del Proceso de Inserción de los Excombatientes del FMLN*. San Salvador: Fundación 16 de Enero.

<sup>11</sup> C. Roldan, S. Villalona and C. Augusto (1995) *Evaluación del Proceso de Inserción de los Excombatientes del FMLN* *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> C. Conaway and S. Martinez (2004), *op. cit.*

Direct damage caused by the conflict is estimated by the government to have totalled \$329m, with costs of \$708m. Total reconstruction constructs (which were subsequently exacerbated by a series of natural disasters) was put at \$1.8 billion.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that had the conflict not occurred, El Salvador's per capita GDP would be at least 75% higher than the 2000 value and poverty would have been 15% lower.<sup>14</sup> Child malnutrition could have been halved to about 6% and infant mortality a quarter of the figure reported in 2000.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 4: Population in Poverty 1976-1988**

Year	Urban Poverty			Rural Poverty		
	Total	Moderate	Extreme	Total	Moderate	Extreme
1976	50	30	20	N/a	N/a	N/a
1985	47	21	26	63	30	32
1988	61	31	30	N/a	N/a	N/a

World Bank (1994) *“El Salvador: The Challenge of Poverty Alleviation”*, Report No. 12315-ES.

## 2.2 Post conflict economic challenges and programmes

In the post–conflict period, substantive gains in terms of poverty reduction and human security (freedom from want) were made. Poverty levels declined in the 1990s. Whereas in 1991 an estimated 66% of the population lived in poverty (33% in extreme poverty and 33% in moderate poverty) by 2002 this had fallen to 43%. Poverty reduction gains in urban areas outstripped those of rural areas (26% against 15%).

This is attributed to the implementation of a stabilisation and structural adjustment programme that generated strong economic growth and a national reconstruction programme that targeted the needs of the poor. As such, there was inter-connection between DDR programming and socio-economic reconstruction strategies.

<sup>13</sup> M. Hume (2004) *Armed Violence and Poverty in El Salvador: A Mini Case Study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative*. CICS: University of Bradford. Available at [http://www.undp.org/bcpr/documents/armed\\_violence/AVPI\\_El\\_Salvador.pdf](http://www.undp.org/bcpr/documents/armed_violence/AVPI_El_Salvador.pdf). Accessed 20/05/2008.

<sup>14</sup> H. Lopez (2001) *The Cost of Armed Conflict in Central America*. LCR: World Bank and H. Lopez (2003) *The Economic and Social Cost of Armed Conflict in El Salvador*. CPRU Dissemination Note Number 8, World Bank.

<sup>15</sup> H. Lopez (2003) *The Economic and Social Cost of Armed Conflict in El Salvador*. *Ibid.*

### ***Economic Adjustment and Growth***

In 1989, the government implemented a stabilisation and structural adjustment programme intended to address the economic crisis and sharp decline in development indicators. Following the conclusion of the peace process in 1992, investment and economic growth picked up, with GDP increasing at an annual average rate of 6% during 1990-1995. This slowed to an annual average 2.8% between 1996 and 2002 as coffee prices fell and following two earthquakes in 2001. During this period, the structural reform package was deepened, reflected in the extensive privatisation process that was undertaken.

While economic growth assisted in reducing poverty levels, it was not pro poor growth and contributed to an increase in inequality and further concentration of income and assets. Those living in rural areas, employed in the informal or agricultural sectors, without labour market connections, with low levels of education and without access to credit or assets were the most likely to be poor, with poverty transmitted on an inter-generational basis.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 5: Distribution of Income**

	Poorest 1 quintile	2 quintile	3 quintile	4 quintile	Richest 5 quintile	Gini
1991	3.1	7.8	12.7	20.5	56.0	0.527
1996	3.3	7.9	13.1	21.1	54.7	0.517
2002	2.8	7.5	12.8	21.2	55.7	0.534
Change 1991/96	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.6	-1.3	-0.01
Change 1996/02	-0.5	-0.4	-0.3	0.1	1	0.017
Change 1991/02	-0.3	-0.3	0.1	0.7	-0.3	0.007

Source: DIGESTYC

Rural poverty was attributed to the scarcity of the land and the concentration of ownership. Despite two agrarian reform and land redistribution processes in the 1980s and 1990s, concentration of landholdings persisted with an estimated 70% of owners holding just 11% of land of which the average plot size was less than one hectare. Changes in the productive structure of the economy, with the significance of agriculture, and its contribution to GDP, fell as the country transitioned to an industry

---

<sup>16</sup> O. Arias (2004) *Poverty in El Salvador During the 1990s: Evolution and Characteristics*. DC: World Bank.

and services oriented economy after the adjustment. Natural disasters including El Niño in 1997, hurricane Mitch in 1998 and 2 earthquakes in 2001 worsened the already difficult situation. Moreover, after 1997 there was a fall in international coffee prices and appreciation of the exchange rate. Rural insecurity undermined investment in agriculture and there was ongoing insecurity of land holdings. In 1995, 94% of families in the top quintile owned land compared to 75% of the families in the bottom quintile. Marketing structures were uncompetitive. Agricultural technology generation and transfer systems were poor, the rural financial system weak and the investment in rural roads and other infrastructure low.

### **2.3 National Reconstruction Programme**

As a result of preliminary agreements on socio-economic redevelopment in the Peace Accord of 1992, and acknowledgement of the need to address the underlying structural causes of the conflict, there was a substantial increase in public spending during the 1990s. The international community supported the National Reconstruction Program (NRP) and provided financial disbursements of US\$ 1 billion. The World Bank was engaged through the 1991 Social Sector Rehabilitation project. In 1996 social expenditures represented 31% of budgeted spending, rising to 46% by 2003. The NRP offset the harsh impact of the adjustment programme. Liberalisation of utility prices was paralleled by the introduction of subsidies to the poorest households. Infrastructure renewal and reconstruction was deliberately labour intensive to enhance employment opportunities and through the Social Investment Fund, which was created in 1990, cooperative and small companies were contracted to rebuild community facilities. The fund itself was mandated to finance basic infrastructure in poor communities, and this was broadened in 1997, when the Fund became a permanent institution and was renamed the Social Investment Fund for Local Development (FISDL).

## **3. Human Security**

### **3.1 Freedom from Want**

The reduction in military expenditures increased domestic finances available for social expenditure. These fell from 25% of government spending at the beginning of the 1990s to 10% by the end of the decade, commensurate with the 30,000 reduction in personnel numbers. However, savings here were offset by new financing requirements, such as funding for new post-conflict institutions (the National Civilian Police, PNC) and the National Reconstruction Program.

**Table 6: Headcount Poverty 1991-2002**

	1991			1995			2000			2002		
	Nation	Urban	Rural	Nation	Urban	Rural	Nation	Urban	Rural	Nation	Urban	Rural
Total- Official	66	60	71	54	46	64	45	34	59	43	34	56
Total-World Bank	64	59	70	50	39	65	40	29	55	37	29	50
Moderate- Official	33	32	34	32	31	35	25	23	28	24	22	27
Moderate- World Bank	33	34	33	30	27	34	24	20	29	22	19	25
Extreme- Official	33	28	37	22	15	30	19	11	31	19	12	29
Extreme- World Bank	31	25	37	21	12	31	16	8	27	15	9	25

Source: DICASTYC's Household Surveys for Official estimates

The increase in social expenditures mainly benefited lower income groups, and this in turn led to an improvement in social indicators and particularly for the poorest quintile of the population. The HDI for El Salvador in 2004/5 was 0.729, a ranking of 101st out of 177 countries. The HDI for previous years was 0.593 (1975), 0.589 (1980), 0.610 (1985), 0.651 (1990), 0.715 (2000). The GDP per capita was estimated at \$5,041. Life expectancy increased by 58.2% (1970-75) to 71.1 years. The infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) declined to 24 from 111 in 1970, while the infant mortality rate for children under five fell from 162 per 1,000 live births to 28. Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio increased to 69.7%, while the number of children reaching Grade 5 increased from 58% of Grade 1 students in 1991 to 73% in 2003. The number of children underweight fell from 19% (1996-2004) to 10% (ages 0-5). Access to water increased from 55% of households in 1991 to 76% by 2002. Finally, electrification (taken as an indicator of post conflict reconstruction effectiveness) increased, from 70% in 1991 to 88% by 2002.

In terms of employment, the labour market was characterised by low rates of unemployment (8.7% in 1991 decreasing to 6.3% in 2002) but high rates of

underemployment (26%).<sup>17</sup> Remittances emerged as a key component of household income in the 1990s, increasing from US\$400 million in 1990 to over US\$ 2 billion in 2002. However, this influx of revenue fuelled exchange rate appreciation, while benefiting only 35% of the poorest families. By contrast, wealthier households received 116% of the average remittance.

Despite the gains made, poverty and structural inequality was an ongoing problem. It has been recommended that the government pursue a more effective pro-poor strategy by: a) tailoring policy interventions to the poorest households; b) enhancing social safety nets; c) expanding access to credit and assets and; d) improving investment in education and basic infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> This is now an ‘accepted priority in El Salvador’ however at an estimated cost of 3.4% of GDP ‘the political consensus required to mobilise the resources to finance these needs may be lacking.’<sup>19</sup>

### ***Gender***

The position of women in Salvadoran society was altered by the conflict, as represented by an increase in female participation in the economy and politics. An estimated 29% of households were headed by women after the war. The 2001 household survey indicated that gender inequity had been reduced significantly and NGO reports emphasise the role played by women in reconstructing communities. In its gender empowerment measure (GEM) for 2004, the UN Human Development Report ranked El Salvador 48th out of 75 countries in the GEM with a value of 0.529. Significant progress was made by the government in promoting female enrolment in education through ‘Initial Education’ within the ‘Framework of the Schools for Fathers and Mothers’ programme supported by the World Bank, and the ‘Education for Life’ programme of the government Secretary for the Family. By 2005 the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary schooling was similar as were levels of literacy.

In political representation, the number of congresswomen increased from 7 in 1990 to 9 in 2002 and women occupied key government posts including the Ministry of Planning (which led the stabilisation, structural reform and national reconstruction

---

<sup>17</sup> World Bank (1994) *El Salvador: The Challenge of Poverty Alleviation*. Report No. 12315-ES, Annex A, page 4. 5

<sup>18</sup> *Poverty Assessment and Public Expenditure Review* (2004) DC: World Bank.

<sup>19</sup> *Public Expenditure Review (PER) and Poverty Assessment (PA)* (2004) DC: World Bank.

process), in the early 1990s, and the Ministry of Education. However, patriarchal norms persisted. Many demobilised women deferred training and employment opportunities created through the National Reconstruction Programme and DDR process to male partners. There was pressure on women to return to traditional female roles and it was reported that some men were reluctant to allow female partners to participate in community re-development and training programmes. A strong rise in domestic violence and violence against women was also reported.<sup>20</sup> Child domestic labour was a significant problem, underscoring the limited progress made by El Salvador in meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Salvadoran Constitution. Interviews with 21,500 youths between the ages of fourteen and nineteen working in domestic service for a 2004 report on abuses against child workers<sup>21</sup> found that 20,800, over 95% of these youths were girls and women, of which nearly one-quarter were aged between nine and eleven. Psychological mistreatment and sexual harassment was commonly reported.

### **Freedom from Fear**

Progress in delivering transitional justice was hampered by the reluctance of the armed forces and the national government to accept the findings of the Ad Hoc and Truth Commission. The three-member Ad Hoc Commission, which was intended as a preliminary step in the reform of the military and allocation of responsibility for human rights abuses, had only three-months to conduct its work. It only investigated 230 senior military officials, leading to the recommended dismissal or transfer of half. The Cristiani government delayed compliance, violating the Peace Accords which required fulfilment of the Ad Hoc Commission's recommendations in advance of the Truth Commission releasing its report in March 1993. The government was forced to act against those officers that were named in both reports, however President Cristiani again impeded due process when his government requested that those cited for human rights violations not have their names made public (as required under the accords) and implied that his government could not guarantee the safety of witnesses.

---

<sup>20</sup> C. Conaway and S. Martinez (2004), *op. cit.*, p.99.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch (2004) *Abuses Against Child Domestic Workers in El Salvador*. Vol. 16, No. 1(B) Available at [http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/El\\_Salvador/elsalvadorHRWabuses.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/El_Salvador/elsalvadorHRWabuses.pdf). Accessed 5/04/2008.

The report of the Truth Commission 'From Madness to Hope' held the armed forces responsible for more than 90% of major human rights violations investigated. The right-wing party, ARENA rejected the report and used its majority in legislative assembly elections that had preceded the peace accords, to pass an amnesty law. However:

On balance it is fair to say that the Ad Hoc and Truth Commission reports did have the effect of breaching the traditional wall of impunity that had surrounded the armed forces, and facilitated the systematic abuse of human rights in El Salvador. One clear effect was to reduce the military's dominant position in political life. In the end, a purge of the military was carried out, the security forces were disbanded, and thus a major obstacle to democratic transition was reduced if not eliminated.<sup>22</sup>

The Salvadoran judicial system was historically under-funded and partisan. Constitutional reforms enacted after 1991 reduced the power of the Supreme Court, introduced legislative assembly nomination for Supreme Court Justice and financial independence for the judiciary by ring-fencing 6% of the national budget for the legal system. However, the Supreme Court did not co-operate with the reform process. There was a brief crisis following contested nominations to the new Supreme Court in 1994, but this was finally resolved by the National Assembly and this in turn presaged a thorough reform of the judicial system and judicial training. Only 11 of the country's 600 judges were finally removed from office, even though the true number of judges responsible for fostering impunity was seen by ONASUL as far higher.<sup>23</sup>

Post-conflict El Salvador was characterised by chronic insecurity<sup>24</sup> owing to a surge in criminality, a proliferation of legal and illegally held small arms and light weapons, and a growing gang culture (the *maras*, estimated to number 10-15,000). This impeded economic development progress and led to a militarisation of Salvadoran society. Figures for 1997 estimated that violence cost the equivalent of one quarter of

---

<sup>22</sup> L. O'Shaughnessy and M. Dodson (1999) 'Political Bargaining and Democratic Transitions : A Comparison of Nicaragua and El Salvador'.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> UNODC (2007) *Crime and Development in Central America: Caught in the Crossfire*, UNODC: Vienna. [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Central\\_America\\_Study\\_2007.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Central_America_Study_2007.pdf)

GDP, diverting resources from investment and social programmes.<sup>25</sup> Insecurity also reinforced social inequalities, with wealthier groups able to purchase private security, a situation that in turn led to problems of impunity. In 2004, there were an estimated 70,000 private security agents. By contrast PNC numbers totalled just 20,000.<sup>26</sup> Gender based violence was problematic and widespread. An estimated 57% of women suffered violence from their partners and in 2003<sup>27</sup> Female children engaged in domestic service reported that fear of violence prevented them from attending night school. By 1995 the Salvadoran Attorney General's Office recorded 7,877 violent deaths, indicating 21 homicides per day. *This was above the daily average of 17 recording during twelve years of civil war.*

Factors accounting for this insecurity were the illicit circulation of weapons and the embedding of the narcotics trade, particularly as effective counter-narcotics enforcement in the Caribbean redirected trafficking routes through Central America. An influx of drug money financed illicit weapons acquisition, with weapons flows facilitated by El Salvador's porous borders, numerous clandestine airstrips, weak intelligence capabilities (and security sector complicity) and serious economic problems, which increased the benefits of participation in the lucrative trafficking industry.<sup>28</sup>

Other contributing factors were the increase in legally held firearms (underscoring weaknesses in SALW control programmes) and the growth of state sponsored violence as a response to violent crime, such as the 2003 *Mano Dura*, which violated international human rights accords.<sup>29</sup> In this context of post-war trauma and insecurity, violence became a primary method of 'conflict resolution.' An estimated 86% of murders were attributed by the PNC to social violence – including domestic, family and neighbourhood disputes.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> M. Hume (2004) *Armed Violence and Poverty in El Salvador: A Mini Case Study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative*. CICS: University of Bradford, p.28.

[http://www.undp.org/bcpr/documents/armed\\_violence/AVPI\\_El\\_Salvador.pdf](http://www.undp.org/bcpr/documents/armed_violence/AVPI_El_Salvador.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> E. Amaya and G. Palmeiri (2000) 'Debilidad Institucional, Impunidad y violencia' in UNDP *Violencia en una Sociedad en Transición: Ensayos*. San Salvador: UNDP.

<sup>28</sup> UNODC (2007) *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> M. Hume (2004) *Op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

In terms of SALW the structures of technical support that existed during the UN supervised disarmament phase did not exist in the post conflict period and disarmament strategies in the Phase 1 context were not applicable in the Phase 2 post-conflict scenario, which showed traditional supply-side arms controls to be an inadequate response to the drivers of weapons acquisition – specifically the drugs trade.<sup>31</sup>

The UN sought to address weapons proliferation, initially through a buy-back program proposed in 1995. This was not accepted by the government: ‘It appears that [...] conflict over the role of the UN in El Salvador was responsible [...] it was seen as excessive interference in the domestic security affairs of the country.’<sup>32</sup> The initiative was taken up by a civil society based coalition led by the business sector, the *Patriotic Movement against Crime* (MPCD), formed in 1995. The work of the MPCD, which was co-ordinated with the Ministries of Public Security, Justice and the Interior and the Direction of the PNC,<sup>33</sup> was based on the ‘Toys for Guns’ programme implemented in the Dominican Republic. The first weapons collection round was launched in September 1996. A further 22 rounds followed though until 1999.

The El Salvador ‘Goods for Guns’ project was multi-phased, with the aim of raising awareness about the dangers of guns and encouraging citizen participation in combating crime. It was not linked to a broader social or economic development programme or to the international donor community. The business community was the lead actor and it was the projects association with upper and middle class interests which is seen to have encouraged the support of the ARENA government.

The project was largely focused on urban areas, with the Catholic Church providing weapons collection sites. Procedures to receive, store and destroy the weapons collected were devised and implemented by the national government through the Logistics Division of the Ministry of Defence. During the first rounds of Goods for

---

<sup>31</sup> E. Laurance and W. Godnick (2002) *Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala*. Monterey, CA: Monterey Institute of International Studies.

[http://sand.miis.edu/research/2000/jan2000/bicc\\_elsgua.pdf](http://sand.miis.edu/research/2000/jan2000/bicc_elsgua.pdf). Accessed 20/05/2008.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Guns US\$15 was given for grenades and mines, however the large quantities of weapons brought forward made it difficult to sustain this financial incentive. Between 1996 and 1999, 9,527 weapons and 129,696 rounds of ammunition were voluntarily turned in.

**Table 7: Weapons Collected by MPCD 1996-99<sup>34</sup>**

Pistols and short arms	1,354
Long arms including assault rifles	3,043
Grenades	3,180
Grenade launchers	44
Law Rockets	290
Detonator cord	84
Detonators	1,042
Blocks of TNT	277
C-4 explosive	147
Mines	55
Mortars	4
RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenades	6
SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles	1
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>9,527</b>
Magazines	3,157
Ammunition	129,696
<b>Total</b>	<b>142,380</b>

Source: Patriotic Movement against Crime (MPCD), August 1999

The relative success of the Good for Guns programme was offset by the high levels of gun ownership in the country. 48,620 more new firearms were legally imported into El Salvador than those turned in during Goods for Guns and an estimated 52,270 people in the capital San Salvador carried weapons and legal import levels remained high.

**Table 8: Legal Gun Imports 1996-1999**

<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>Total</u>
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	--------------

<sup>34</sup> E. Laurance and W. Godnick (2002) *Weapons Collection in Central America: El Salvador and Guatemala*.

Pistols	10,853		9,984	12,934	
	4,293	38,064			
Rifles	5,942	2,802	4,609	1,860	15,213
Total	16,795	12,786		17,543	
	6,153	53,277			

Source: E. Laurance and W. Godnick (2002)

## Summary

The PCR and DDR processes in El Salvador were relatively successful and led to some positive outcomes. This has been attributed to several factors, starting from the successful implementation of the Peace Accords, the focus of the National Reconstruction Program on the poor and demobilised, and the gradual building of democratic institutions. This created a favourable environment for growth and social investment.<sup>35</sup> Highly positive were the fall in gender discrimination in education and employment and an active role for women in the DDR and PCR process. Female participation in the peace accords and technical agreements is seen to have generated a more holistic approach to DDR and socio-economic reactivation.

However, gains made in the immediate post-conflict period were undermined by the surge in crime and violence and continued impunity of the security sector and private security agencies. Insufficient attention was paid to the structural causes of crime and insecurity or the drivers of the post-conflict gun culture. Although sizeable and effectively targeted, the investments made in education and social welfare was inadequate. Too much emphasis was placed on agriculture and land distribution in the reinsertion and reintegration package. Given El Salvador's transition to a service and industries based economy after the conflict, a focus on skills training rather than land distribution could have been more beneficial. Underemployment and inequality were significant and ongoing problems. This focuses attention on the need for pro-poor growth strategies.<sup>36</sup> Violence against women and girls needed to be prioritised.

<sup>35</sup> J. Silvério Marques (2004) *Operationalizing Pro-Poor Growth The Case of El Salvador*, DC: World Bank Available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/oppgelsalvador.pdf>. Accessed 20/05/2008.

<sup>36</sup> H. Lopez (2004) Pro growth, pro poor: Is there a trade off? DC: World Bank.