



REINTEGRATING FORMER CAAFAG IN NEPAL

A Participatory Action Research Report on Former Children
Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG)



rtc
responding to conflict

Reintegrating Former CAAFAG in Nepal

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Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG)**

August 2012

CWIN Nepal
In partnership with
Responding to Conflict (RCT)

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Acronyms

AUSAID	The Australian Agency for International Development
BASE	Backward Society Education, Nepal.
BNA	Beautiful Nepal Association (Sundar Nepal Sanstha)
CAAC	Children Affected by Armed Conflicts
CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CDO	Chief District Officer
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
CWS	Child Welfare Scheme
DCWB	District Child Welfare Board
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DWCO	District Women and Children Office
EC	European Commission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HimRights	Himalayan Human Rights Monitors
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IRC	International Rescue Committee
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Centre
LPC	Local Peace Committee
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNSWA	Nepal National Social Welfare Association
OTCDC	Oppressed and Tribal Caste Development Center
PCR	Post-Conflict Reconstruction
RTC	Responding To Conflict
SLC	Nepali School Leaving Certificate
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
TMM	Tharu Mahila Manch
TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
UCPM	United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VCPC	Village Child Protection Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee
VMLR	Verified Minors and Late Recruits

Executive Summary

The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) aimed to build sustainable peace in Nepal following ten years of conflict. The CPA included provision for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of members of armed groups. However children and youths who had belonged to armed groups, but were not registered as members at the time of the signing of the CPA were excluded from the agreement.

In post-conflict Nepal, more than a thousand Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) have been deprived of education, assistance and development due to substantial gaps in coverage for those who fled, were dismissed or disbanded from armed forces/ armed groups prior to the signing of the CPA. This is in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular to their right to education and personal development.

Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) and Responding to Conflict (RTC), with the support of the European Commission (EC), have produced this research report as part of a jointly implemented three year project, 'Realisation of the rights, and the sustainable reintegration and development of all groups of children in Nepal associated with or previously associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG)'. The aim of the project is to contribute towards strengthening policy frameworks and practical responses to address the psycho-social, family, community, and institutional challenges to effective reunification, reintegration and long-term development of children who fled armed forces and armed groups prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA).

This study has been conducted to identify the needs of these children and youth and to ascertain the extent and nature of support provided by state and non-state actors and organisations. Data has been collected from 11 districts (the project is active in 27 districts) covering the 5 development regions of Nepal, through interviews

with a sample of former CAAFAG and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a range of stakeholders providing direct assistance to former CAAFAG. An analysis of the empirical data gathered from June to December 2011 has been conducted. On the basis of the findings located in this report, recommendations to inform policy-advocacy to the state, capacity development of state and non-state community level institutions, and strengthen coordination between national and international organisations, have been suggested relating to the needs of former CAAFAG.

Many of these children and youth have through fear of being ostracized or extra-judicial punishment fled their places of origin. In many cases this has meant leaving their families. Combined with a prevailing culture of stigmatization the majority do not register themselves as either CAAFAG or internally displaced persons (IDPs). For these children and youth there is an evident fear of reprisal from peers associated with the armed group that the child fled from. In addition many have experienced trauma from their experience which manifests in learning or social difficulties and in some cases more extreme forms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Access to a holistic and staged support for psycho-social recovery and social reintegration and reconciliation is still limited in Nepal. In most cases these children and youth will not have had opportunity to fully exercise their right to education and do not have the vocational skills or opportunities to embark on a productive livelihood strategy. In an environment where there is a trend in the formation of armed groups whose purpose may be banditry or political, former child soldiers are particularly 'at risk' of joining such groups which may threaten the stability established in peripheral regions in Nepal after the signing of the CPA. The key question to be addressed is: how can former CAAFAG be encouraged and supported so that they can be actors for peace rather than victims?

Conclusions from the research

Those former CAAFAG who did not join armed forces or armed groups voluntarily and with political conviction are more likely to suffer from a range of psycho-social issues.

Irrespective of gender it can be concluded that the importance of including the family of the former CAAFAG in the needs assessment process and the design of reintegration processes is important in providing an immediate psycho-social support mechanism.

More specifically, conclusions regarding social reintegration challenges in the former CAAFAG's place of origin point to a profile of those former CAAFAG who are most likely to face multiple challenges to social reintegration:

- Female
- Low-caste
- Joined armed forces/groups for reasons other than a strong political belief

Such persons are more likely to:

- Face stigmatisation from the peers and the broader community
- Face stigmatisation affecting their families standing within their community
- Require economic support (i.e. employment opportunities) and face further stigmatisation due to this
- Suffer from a range of psycho-social issues (including trauma associated with their experiences during association, and anxiety regarding reintegration challenges)

To date there has been no targeted and tailored support for former CAAFAG who ceased their association prior to the signing of the CPA and subsequent registration and verification processes. A number of these persons have received some form of external assistance through more general community development initiatives by state and non-state development actors. In the majority of cases such assistance is considered inadequate to address both the material and psychosocial needs of this group.

Focus Group Discussions with a range of actors in all districts and the survey findings that social reintegration of CAAFAG is a largely unaddressed issue.

The majority of former CAAFAG emphasise the need for greater support for formal and vocational education. Migrant labour is an option for many but this is not considered a desirable choice and does not address family and social reintegration issues, and as other research has shown, can lead to other issues of stigmatisation, psychological and physical trauma.

State and non-state actors claim that support to date for former CAAFAG is available but is insufficient in terms of time and resources, and inconsistent between regions/districts. This in part reflects regional disparities in resource allocations and the availability of specialised services for a coordinated referral of cases based on individual needs. Support for psycho-social well-being is particularly patchy.

There is evidence in several districts of attempts at effective coordination of services (including referral) by local government institutions. Maintaining and scaling-up these initiatives is challenging due to a reliance on individual commitment and relationships, and inconsistencies between districts regarding which sub-district organisations are present and functioning, and interpretations of duties and responsibilities. However, there is evidence to suggest that with education and commitment district and sub-district coordination and service referral mechanisms (if dealt with sensitively) may work and aid effective support.

Recommendations

To all concerned stakeholders providing direct assistance to former CAAFAG:

The data collected as part of this study suggests a range of planning issues which need to be considered by all stakeholders, both at the national and local level, who are providing direct assistance to former CAAFAG:

1. Individual case research and case specific support is required for

former CAAFAG in those districts that have been either neglected or where there is strong anecdotal evidence that a significant caseload of former CAAFAG have either not been identified or reached with existing support provisions.

2. Strong consideration should be given to promoting the idea of integrated development projects that address basic needs, human rights and social reintegration issues of former CAAFAG without focusing explicitly on the CAAFAG issue in order to avoid potentially damaging 'labelling'.
3. Learning from projects challenging discriminatory gender and caste perceptions and practices needs to be incorporated into action supporting former CAAFAG, and in particular social reintegration of former CAAFAG;
4. Explore the possibility of strengthening the capacities of the (few) regional institutions that offer specialised or clinical psycho-social support to enable cross-district referrals of cases, rapid professional examination and the identification of options for specialised support.
5. Coordination between state and non-actors providing direct assistance to former CAAFAG needs to improve. There is the danger that errors are being duplicated and lessons learnt are not being shared. Gaps in coverage will continue to exist unless coordination mechanisms are enhanced.

More specifically:

To the Government of Nepal

Formal acknowledgement of former CAAFAG who ceased their association prior to the signing of the CPA needs to be given in policy and ministerial directives to ensure the social protection of said persons and the collective understanding of the duties of various state institutions to protect and assist social reintegration.

Long-term and sustainable support should be given from the

Government in relation to education, vocational training and employment.

The Government of Nepal should ensure that staff capacity is adequate to engage, with sensitivity, with former CAAFAG issues within regional, district and sub-district state or state sponsored institutions. Specifically:

Particular attention should be paid to developing the capacities of VDC's and DDC's to ensure adequate participation for former CAAFAG in development planning.

Local peace committees, community based organizations, and local human rights commission should have sufficient knowledge of former CAAFAG issues and trained personnel to contribute towards addressing social reintegration on a case by case basis.

The Government of Nepal should encourage sub-national state institutions to collaborate with relevant non-state actors in order to develop effective coordination and referral mechanisms. This should be inclusive of the District Child Welfare Boards and National Human Rights Commission.

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To International donors and Governments

International donors should act upon the knowledge that the existing provisions agreed under the CPA for support to verified minors is insufficient in terms of defining former CAAFAG and in addressing the needs and priorities of former CAAFAG.

International donors should work with the Government of Nepal to expand the institutionalised definition of former CAAFAG, and their right to state protection and adequate assistance in accordance with the various human and child right conventions. Particular attention should be given to ensuring the right to return with safety and dignity.

International donors should make sufficient funds available for NGO's and Government to:

Support initiatives to develop coordinated institutional capabilities to deal with referrals of former CAAFAG requiring specialised support.

Ensure that targeted assistance to former CAAFAG is of a sufficient amount and duration to adequately address both immediate and longer-term needs such as education (formal and tertiary/vocational).

Encourage both state and non-state partners to include former CAAFAG in general development assistance, and to seek specialised support from qualified state or non-state actors for assessing the needs of former CAAFAG.

To International and national NGO's

1. Ensure sustainable social reintegration by follow-up programs and further livelihood options
2. Divert existing problems and issues of former CAAFAG by building links between the CAAFAG and service providing organizations
3. Facilitate engagement and participation of CAAFAG with existing networks of youths.

Follow-ups with existing service providers and government institutions in various districts for their pro-active engagement in addressing issues of CAAFAG

Exchange of information, sharing the cases and adopt collaborative/cooperative approach in order to address the situation best.

1. Introduction

Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) and Responding to Conflict (RTC), with the support of the European Commission (EC), have produced this research report as part of a jointly implemented three year project, '*Realisation of the rights, and the sustainable reintegration and development of all groups of children in Nepal associated with or previously associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG)*'. The aim of the project is to contribute towards strengthening policy frameworks and practical responses to address the psycho-social, family, community, and institutional challenges to effective reunification, reintegration and long-term development of children who fled armed forces and armed groups prior to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA).

A significant number of former CAAFAG¹ have not been registered and are not receiving support despite the commitments and responsibilities as agreed to under the terms of the CPA and the Action Plan. The CPA included provisions designed to protect children from further recruitment, abductions and detention. All parties to the accord affirmed their commitment to the principles of International Humanitarian Law and principles and norms concerning Human Rights, including the rights to life, freedom, security, return to original residence or settlement elsewhere, and the right to education: '*Children so affected shall, immediately, be rescued and necessary and appropriate assistance shall be provided for their rehabilitation.*' In addition to the CPA, an Action Plan between the Government of Nepal, the UCPN (M), and the United Nations in Nepal on the Discharge of Disqualified Maoist Army Personnel and Related Tasks was signed by parties to the CPA to address the long-standing issue of child soldiers in Nepal. This was beginning to be enacted in 2010. However, more than a thousand former CAAFAG have been deprived of education, assistance and development due to substantial gaps in coverage for those who fled, were dismissed or disbanded from armed forces or armed groups prior to the signing of

the CPA. This is in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular to their right to education and personal development.² The rights and specific needs of these children remains an unaddressed issue both in terms of policy and to a large extent practice. This group are not acknowledged under the existing CPA and Action Plan.

This study has been conducted to identify the needs of these children and youth and to ascertain the extent and nature of support provided by state and non-state actors and organisations. Data has been collected from 11 districts (the project is active in 27 districts³), covering the 5 development regions of Nepal, through structured survey interviews with a sample of former CAAFAG and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a range of stakeholders providing direct assistance to former CAAFAG. An analysis of the empirical data gathered from June to December 2011 has been conducted. On the basis of the findings presented in this report a number of recommendations are made for consideration for both the state, governmental and non-governmental organisations relating to the needs of former CAAFAG.

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This report has been presented in 4 sections. In the second section (after the introduction), the methodology employed to collect and analyse empirical data has been described, with particular attention paid to the information framework that has informed this process. In section three, an overview of results and an analysis has been presented. This chapter has been divided into two parts. The first has been devoted to interviews conducted with a sample of former CAAFAG. The second part presents the findings derived from a number of FGDs. Conclusions and recommendations have been presented in the section four.

2. Methodology

The overall research methodology employed by CWIN and RTC has been grounded on the principles of child participation, child choice, and security of information. CWIN works with the principle that all activity choices, monitoring and evaluation should be built on the rights, needs and priorities of individual cases.

CWIN have adopted a collaborative approach in the identification of individual cases, as referrals, for the research by drawing upon existing data sets held by CWIN and the CAAFAG Working Group to ensure efficiency in the conduct of the research. The design of the research has combined both quantitative and qualitative components. The research for this report was carried out in 11 focus districts, (project is active in 27 districts) which were identified on the basis of concentration of cases of CAAFAG. Research was conducted in the following districts (listed by region):

Eastern

- Morang
- Dhankuta

Mid-Western

- Banke
- Bardiya

Central

- Rautahat
- Makwanpur
- Kathmandu (FGD only)

Far-Western

- Kanchanpur
- Kailali
- Arghakhanchi
- Kaski

Western

- Tanahu

The collection of data and subsequent analysis was conducted from June to December 2011. Local organisations in contact with the CAAFAG in different districts have also been mobilised for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. In this process, RTC provided technical support in the design, analysis and documentation of the survey.

The research has focused on gathering data primarily from individual cases of former CAAFAG, with complementary data generated from FGDs with a range of state actors (both national and local Government Officials) and NGOs and UN agencies supplying direct assistance to CAAFAG. Special attention has been paid to devising, testing and refining methodologies for gathering information. The following information framework has informed the survey design and methodologies:

- Family background and background of association with armed force/group of CAAFAG and the context and effect(s) of leaving this association;
 - Personal problems, challenges in the family and conflict in community regarding social reintegration;
 - Potential security risks/ possible challenges in social reintegration and options for return, resettlement or relocation;
 - Aspirations for future: what option for personal development and livelihood they prefer;
- 4**
- Perceived social, learning and personal development difficulties;
 - Trauma and psycho-social history;
 - Recommendations for policy revision and its implementation from stakeholders.

2.1 Interviews with a Sample of Former CAAFAG

A sample of 50 former CAAFAG was interviewed from 11 districts. The sample comprised 4-5 youths in each district. A questionnaire was devised, the data from which was used in a simple econometric model to identify the relationship (correlation) between key issues (variables).

The analysis of the questionnaire was done keeping in mind three key issues: social reintegration, gaps in support and psychosocial wellbeing. Questions that were assumed to have a correlation with these issues were cross tabulated against them. All of these assumed

correlations were tested again on a three-level cross tabulation, with gender, caste and ethnicity as the three variables.

2.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with State Actors (both National and Local Government Officials) and NGOs and UN Agencies Supplying Direct Assistance to CAAFAG

Focus group discussions were facilitated separately with three prominent groupings of stakeholders who are working directly to support former CAAFAG. The three categories included:

- NGO/UN agencies providing direct assistance to CAAFAG and working in different aspects of children and human rights
- Government Officials
- A sample of former CAAFAG.

A summary of each discussion has been presented, with key conclusions drawn out.

3. Overview: Results and Analysis

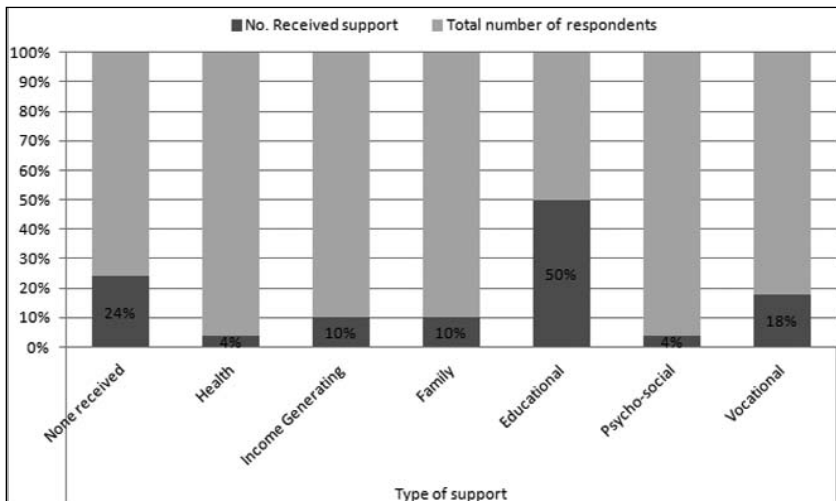
3.1 Interviews with a sample of former CAAFAG

3.1.1. General Results

From the sample of 50 respondents, an important finding was that 24% of the total respondents stated that they have not received *any* form of support. Another major finding was that only 4% of the entire sample of respondents received some degree of psychosocial support. Similarly, 16% of total respondents felt that their primary need was not addressed due to inadequate need identification by the organisation that had provided them with some level of support.

Of the total respondents, 50% of those who went back to a family business wanted to pursue further education, 70% of these wanted to pursue vocational training, and 50% wanted to become entrepreneurs. The data highlights that the majority of former CAAFAG interviewed who went back to a family business have a desire to pursue a different career path, if given a choice. This suggests that they returned to the family business due to a lack of alternative options.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents that received each type of support



3.1.2 Data Interpretation on Social Reintegration

A key finding on social reintegration was that 8.3% of the respondents have not returned to their community of origin, and never intend to exercise their right to return and go back to their place of origin. In addition, 14.6% of the respondent's relationship with their family became worse after their affiliation with the armed group.

Of the respondents forced to join an armed group, 56% claim to be facing stigmatisation in their community, whereas 100% of respondents who joined willingly because of their political belief are back in their community and do not face stigmatisation. The data indicates that those who joined willingly have an easier time reintegrating back to community, as opposed to those who were forced to join.

Table 1: Comparing how the respondent's current engagements affect their communal integration

	Are you back in your community? (village/place of origin)		
	Yes - with no stigmatisation	Yes - but still face stigmatisation	No - still not back in the community
Employed	50%	25%	25%
In vocational training	85.7%	14.3%	-
Studying	54.8%	32.3%	12.9%
Seeking Employment	100%	-	-
Back to family business	60%	40%	-
Entrepreneurship	66.7%	33.3%	-

It was found that 31.3% of those who feel accepted back in their family still face stigmatisation in the community. Likewise, 30% of those whose family took initiatives within their communities still face stigmatisation in the community. However, 6.2% of those whose family took some initiative for community reintegration are not back in the community at all. The above data indicates that even though an individual may have been reintegrated with their family, sustainable community reintegration remains a challenge.

It was noted that 40% of respondents who went back to the family business still face stigmatisation. This is considerably higher than those in other categories.

Social reintegration based on gender

The gender aspect of the three-level cross tabulation shows 29.4% of male respondents face stigmatisation compared with 38.7% of female respondents. This data signifies that female former CAAFAG have more difficulty reintegrating back to society than their male counterparts.

23.5% of male respondent's relationship with family worsened after affiliation, whereas only 9.7% of female respondent's relationship worsened. The numbers show that a diminished family relationship was most frequent in male respondents.

Of the total respondents, 37.5% of females were coerced into joining an armed group, whereas only 22.2% of male respondents were. 58.3% of females who were coerced to join and 50% of females who joined due to peer pressure still face stigmatisation in their community. Both male and female respondents who joined due to their own political belief stated that they do not face any stigmatisation in the community.

This data reinstates the above finding of strong correlation between the reasons behind affiliation and ease or challenges in social reintegration.

Table 2: Comparing how reasons for joining the armed group affect communal integration, and how this differs between males and females

		Are you back in your community? (village/place of origin)		
		Yes - with no stigmatisation	Yes - but still face stigmatisation	No - still not back in the community
Male	Coercion	25%	50%	25%
	Peer pressure	75%	25%	-
	Family Inclination	-	-	-
	Revenge	50%	50%	-
	Political Belief	100%	-	-
	Family Problems	100%	-	-
Female	Coercion	25%	58.30%	16.70%
	Peer pressure	33%	50%	17%
	Family Inclination	75%	25%	-
	Revenge	100%	-	-
	Political Belief	100%	-	-
	Family Problems	40%	60%	-

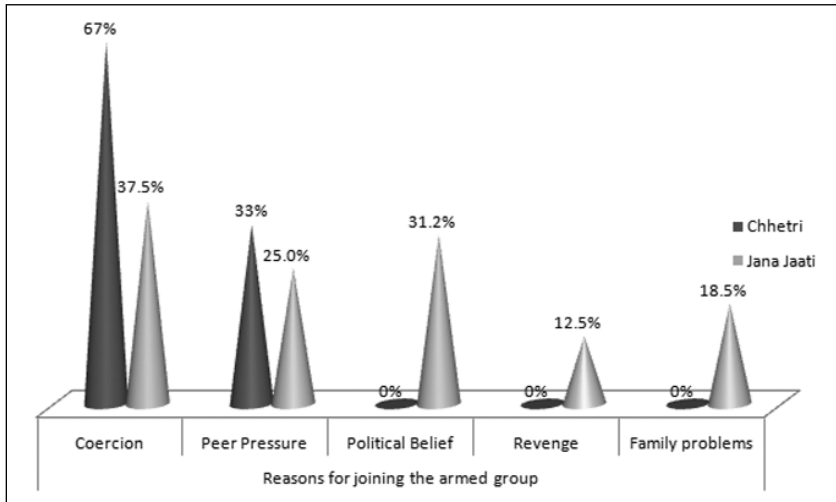
32.3% of females who feel accepted back in their family still face stigmatisation in the wider community. This again stresses the above finding that sustainable community reintegration is difficult despite being accepted by family. Another interesting finding in association with community stigmatisation of male respondents was that there was no observable impact on the status of their family relationship *during* the affiliation with armed group which suggests that even for those former CAAFAG who do not face broader social reintegration challenges, consideration still needs to be given to preparing their families for their return.

Of those who received income-generation support, 75% of female respondents still face stigmatisation whereas none of the males who got the same support reported facing such stigmatisation. This is an interesting finding, possibly suggesting that society still has negative perceptions of women who are self-employed or conduct their own business.

Social reintegration based on ethnicity and caste

While tabulating the social reintegration questions with ethnicity, an interesting finding was that 22.2% of Brahmins stated that they face stigmatisation after affiliation with the armed group compared with 43.8% of Jana Jaatis and 47.1% of Dalits who say they face stigmatisation. This data suggests that social reintegration has been more difficult for the so-called "lower castes."

Figure 2: Comparing how caste/ethnicity affects reasons for joining the armed group



3.1.3 Data Interpretation on Psychosocial Wellbeing

Based on the sample, 27.8% of those who were forced to join armed groups still have some difficulty in concentrating at work or in

everyday activities. An additional 11.1% of respondents classed the problems in concentration as severe. Of those who joined because of peer pressure, 40% still have at least some difficulty in concentrating at work, whereas 40% of those who joined with the intention of taking revenge consider themselves to suffer from severe difficulty in concentrating. It was found that none of the respondents who joined willingly because of their political beliefs or due to family inclination have any difficulty concentrating at work and in everyday activity.

From the study, children who joined armed groups willingly or with family, face little to no psychosocial trauma at present. On the contrary, children who were forced to join in some way, i.e. abducted, joined as a result of peer pressure, or who joined with the intention of taking revenge, still face some degree of psychosocial trauma. This data set shows a significant correlation between the negative relationship with cadres and the respondent's psychosocial wellbeing.

Psychosocial wellbeing based on gender

It was found that female respondents were more prone to suffering psychosocial trauma due to their affiliation with an armed group. The relationship of female fighters with their cadres also had a significant effect on their psychosocial wellbeing. 57% of females who faced domination by the cadres still have difficulty concentrating in work and everyday activities. In contrast, the correlation is not as significant for males who faced domination, with only one still suffering from severe problems and none reported as experiencing moderate difficulties of this type. Of those females who faced exploitation by the cadres, 44.4% still have some issues with concentration and a further 11.1% suffering severe difficulties.

Table 3: Comparing how relationship with cadres affects male's and female's ability to concentrate in work or everyday activities

		No difficulty concentrating	Some/severe difficulty concentrating
Dominated	Men	33%	33%
	Women	28%	57.1
Exploited	Men	100%	0%
	Women	22%	55.50%

The data shows that 75% of males who joined due to peer pressure have severe difficulties concentrating in work, whereas only 16.6% of females who joined due to same reason have this problem. Other than this, there is no significant difference in terms of gender, in the correlation between reasons for affiliation to armed groups and post-conflict psychosocial wellbeing.

Overall, 42.8% of females who were soldiers still have at least some difficulty concentrating in work, whereas only 20% of males under the same task have either moderate difficulty or severe difficulty.

Psychosocial wellbeing based on caste and ethnicity

Of the respondents of Dalit caste, 66.6% who joined with a motive to take revenge still have severe problems concentrating in work and in everyday activities. Similarly, 25% of Dalits who joined due to family problems reported severe problems and 50% experience at least some problems with their concentration. None of the other caste groups have shown such significant levels of mental trauma.

The above data indicates that Dalits who joined for such strong reasons still face more psychosocial trauma in comparison to other caste groups. Another correlation that can be drawn is that 47% of Dalits stated that they continue to face communal stigmatisation. As the highest percentage of all caste groups, this could also be one of

the reasons they still face psychosocial trauma more than the other castes.

In their relationships with cadres, 31.2% of Jana Jaatis and 31.6% of Dalits faced regular insults/insulting behaviour. In addition, 26.3% of Dalits faced domination, of which 20% have severe problems concentrating in work and everyday activities. In contrast, none of the Brahmin respondents felt either dominated or insulted. Hence, these data sets show that the Dalits interviewed were more prone to domination and insult in comparison to other caste groups. This figure needs to be located within the historical context of discrimination Dalits and other lower castes have faced.

Psychosocial wellbeing based on gender and caste/ethnicity

66% of female Chhetris are having some difficulty concentrating in work or everyday activities. Similarly, 16% of female Dalits face severe concentration problems. Overall, 38% of males suffer some difficulty, whereas only 25% of females do. Data suggests female CAAFAG suffered more during the conflict, but show higher rates of recovery than males in the post-conflict environment. By contrast, males were less affected during the conflict, but are taking longer to recover. Perhaps this is an indication that males did not seek/receive support from family/community, whereas females did and hence showed more signs of recovery.

3.1.4 Data Interpretation of Gaps in External Support

From the sample of 50 respondents, an important finding was that 24% of the total respondents stated that they have not received *any* sort of support. The reason cited most frequently for this was the remoteness of their location. This is supported by the fact that most organisations supporting former CAAFAG are based in the district headquarters and its local periphery.

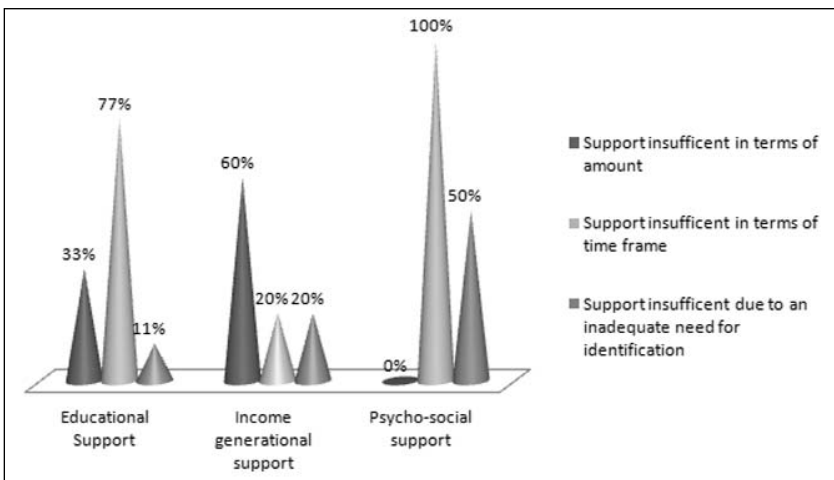
Another major finding was that only 4% of the entire sample received any degree of psychosocial support. Similarly, 16% of total respondents felt that their primary needs were not addressed due to

misidentification by the organisation that provided them some sort of support. Out of the 33 respondents who are currently studying, 27 have received educational support. 19% of those studying have not received any support.

77.8% of the respondents who had received educational support, and 66.7% of those who received vocational training stated that the assistance was insufficient in terms of time frame, as did 84.6% of those who rejoined school. These data sets indicate that 85% of former CAAFAG who are studying and who want to pursue further education feel that the time frame of the support is inadequate and does not match their needs or aspirations. Another interesting finding was that 100% of those who are studying (with or without educational support) want to pursue further education, despite the insufficiency of support.

60% of the former CAAFAG who received income-generating support stated that support was deficient particularly in terms of the amount available. This data clearly states that the majority of former CAAFAG who are self-employed are in need of a greater amount of income-generational support.

Figure 3: Comparing the insufficiency of educational, income generational, and psychosocial support



3.2 Focus Group Discussions with State Actors (both National and Local Government Officials) and NGOs and UN Agencies Supplying Direct Assistance to CAAFAG.

3.2.1 Summary Conclusions

Opinions sometimes differed between participants within each focus group as to needs to be addressed, gaps, types and quality of assistance, and what more needs to be done, by whom, and how. However a number of general conclusions can be drawn that provide both baseline and planning information. These are presented below. Following these conclusions there is a summary of key findings by key informant group and district location.

The majority of support provided directly to CAAFAG in all districts has come from UNICEF, Save the Children and specialist child rights/human rights NGO's.

Amongst NGO informants there is no consistency in responses as to whether all CAAFAG have been identified, or whether even data sets for particular districts exist (although the assumption is that UNICEF has such data).

The focus groups discussions suggest that assistance has been more significant (both in terms of numbers of CAAFAG reached and the range of support offered) in Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Bardiya, Makwanpur, and Arghakhanchi districts. The focus group discussions also highlighted a virtual lack of support to Tanahu district, and inadequate identification and reaching of former CAAFAG in Banke and BARDIYA districts.

Assistance to CAAFAG in these districts has focuses on a range of initiatives, with education and livelihood support being considered successful and family reunion and psycho-social support also being provided. Many of those participating in the focus group discussions considered that assistance packages provided (to date) were insufficiently funded and of too short a duration to have any fundamental impact (including mention of education and livelihood support).

Many former CAAFAG have taken to migratory labour practices, and some are reportedly becoming involved/used in crime.

A number of issues were raised in terms of the quality and breadth of support provided in these districts, notably: Poor coordination in general (between UN, NGO, and government authorities); In all districts where the issue was mentioned (either directly, or indirectly when commenting on former CAAFAG not wishing to be identified as such) Social Reintegration of CAAFAG is a largely unaddressed issue, and this is particularly acute for female former CAAFAG and persons from Dalit and Tharu communities; Inconsistent awareness of specialist interventions for CAAFAG requiring psycho-social support (e.g. specialised institutional support seems to be adequate in Bardiya, Makwanpur and Arghakhanchi, there is apparently no specialised support in Kanchanpur, and little mention of such support in other districts, which either implies lack of knowledge as a result of poor coordination, or inconsistent resources available district by district).

Aside from the District Child Welfare Board (in some of the sampled districts), there has been a lack of coordination with and involvement of district and sub-district government bodies.

The District Child Welfare Board, in collaboration with Local Peace Committees and Chief District Officers have managed to initiate referral mechanisms for a range of support in some districts, although reports from Makawanpur district suggest the effectiveness of such mechanism is limited by LPC and Chief District Officer (CDO) staff turnover.

Government bodies who participated in focus group discussions do not have access to databases of CAAFAG although there is some awareness of overall numbers.

Government bodies have not received instructions from political institutions/parties to engage with the CAAFAG issues but it is acknowledged that a number of former CAAFAG have received government support through other initiatives aimed more generally at education and other child rights.

Some informants have suggested that LPC's and VDC's could be more involved in working on CAAFAG issues (assuming they are functioning).

Focus group discussion with former CAAFAG highlight the perceived importance of education support, as most CAAFAG did not complete their right to education and literacy is perceived to be important in developing a livelihood and more support is required to enable livelihoods;

The difficulties of returning and reintegrating into their communities are also highlighted due to rights abuses conducted against communities by combatant entities, and social prejudice against female former CAAFAG. Some participants in the focus group discussions have suggested that material assistance and time goes some way in easing re-integration issues.

Former CAAFAG did not mention psycho-social issues, possibly explained by the stigmatisation associated with the term and the public setting of the focus group discussions.

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3.2.2 Summary Analyses and Conclusions of Interviews and Discussions with Stakeholders

Interviews and discussions with stakeholders have been presented by stakeholder category:

- INGOs/NGOs
- Government Organisations
- Focused Group Discussion with Former CAAFAG

i. INGOs/NGOs

Kanchanpur District

Support has been provided for up to 350 CAAFAG in the district. The local NGOs in partnership with UNICEF and Save the Children have collectively focused primarily on providing educational support.

Other forms of support include helping to reunite CAAFAG persons with their families, undertaking Income Generating Activities (IGA) and health initiatives ('girl specific'), and supplying limited amounts of food. Whilst there have been CAAFAG-specific approaches, these measures have not always been separated from the broader issues of children and youth, i.e. TMM in partnership with UNICEF have provided scholarships for local schooling. On the issue of psychosocial support confusion was apparent. The Nepal National Social Welfare Association (NNSWA) respondents made reference to educational support and reported that no organisation has been providing psychosocial support in the district, stating that cases are being sent to the Children Desk in the District Court. The district level Peace Committee which has been formed, is not attending to these issues. However the TMM representative stated that in the district psychosocial support was being provided as well as support for education and other initiatives. This confusion highlights that organisations and stakeholders need to work jointly and in a cooperative manner, whether it at the local and/or national level, in order to improve their response.

It was emphasised that there is a need to better document and identify CAAFAG. A micro case study was suggested as one such approach, but there was a broad consensus that many former CAAFAG are not being reached. This was particularly so in Krishnapur and Pilpari VDCs, two areas greatly affected by the war, yet only one individual CAAFAG in each has been identified. Furthermore attempts to reach more former CAAFAG are being hindered by the actions of certain political parties, who are attempting to lure them into their ranks. Indeed the TMM respondent spoke of 'unusual pressure' applied by political parties onto the different programmes.

Moreover, there is a great reluctance of CAAFAG individuals to come forward. This unwillingness is due to the social prejudices and stigmas directed at CAAFAG individuals from their communities and families (this animosity has also been directed towards those organisations working with CAAFAG). This has been particularly the case for those from Dalit and Tharu communities, and for the female

CAAFAG. However the interviewees felt that there have been gradual positive steps to rectify this attitude, but recognised that more needed to be done to encourage and support CAAFAG.

Budgetary and time constraints, and the high number of CAAFAG, are all presenting difficulties to organisations working in the area. The interviewees spoke of the need to foster a greater 'positive attitude' among the CAAFAG, who were deemed to be too dependent on organisations and not self-reliant. Indeed both the former CAAFAG and society as a whole, have too high an expectation of what these programs alone can achieve. There is a real need to raise awareness and for a forum for those affected to air their concerns and the government need to be far more active and assertive on this issue. Future CAAFAG initiatives need to be oriented for the long-term and should be designed to be need-based.

Kailali District

A number of local, national and international organisations were listed as having implemented or are implementing projects focusing on CAAFAG/VMLR (Verified Minors and Late Recruits) and Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (CAAC) in the district, including: Save the Children, Red Cross, UNICEF, AUSAID, Backward Society Education Nepal (BASE), Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), LPC, the District Women Development Office, NNSWDA, World Vision and the District Education Office. There has been support for their education, IGA, vocational training and psychosocial counselling, and INSEC has been monitoring against the UN Security Council Resolution 1612. 400 individuals have been identified as CAAFAG.

The evidence given by the two respondents here fundamentally conflicted. The Red Cross interviewee spoke of good inter-NGO coordination, poor coordination with government agencies, and continuing discussions with political parties. By contrast, the INSEC interviewee strongly disagreed and felt that coordination was poor and because of this, is greatly hampering the programs which are trying to address the root causes and concerns. Furthermore, the Red Cross respondent stated that almost all the children identified as

CAAFAG have now been reached; many were engaged in 'creative activities' and in work; and, there were signs that the community was becoming increasingly sensitive to CAAFAG issues. However the INSEC interviewee believed that 'there has not been any notable work and support in this field,' and went on to highlight the trend of CAAFAG migrating overseas to find work. Thus there is a sharp contradiction in the evidence for this district.

Former CAAFAG continue to face difficulties. Continuing with their education is proving difficult, girls are facing discrimination, and communal animosity towards CAAFAG is still ongoing. Presently, programs are too short-term in terms of outlook and length. There is a need for long-term support, especially in education, as well as further vocational trainings in order to boost employment opportunities. Perhaps even cash grants for Small Medium Enterprise start-ups (SME) should be encouraged as a means of fostering entrepreneurship. Also there is a pressing need to 'collect authentic and detailed information,' which currently is non-existent. It was suggested also that the LPC should be more effective in dealing with CAAFAG issues as it falls under its mandate of handling conflict issues.

Banke District

207 CAAFAG have been identified. Support has been provided in a number of ways, principally by CWIN, and has included work oriented towards education, IGA, 'girls' specific problems', vocational training, psychosocial counselling and emergency medical treatment. Of these, support for education was perceived to be 'comparatively effective'. Furthermore, monitoring of UN Security Council Resolution 1612 has been ongoing by HimRights, especially in the schools. Whilst reconciliation was not deemed a problem here, support for CAAFAG is 'nominal' and there has been little change for the target group, with many female CAAFAG still facing discrimination. Furthermore, there is no authentic data available and many CAAFAG simply have not been reached. Indeed, many feel they are unable to come forward and the community is uncooperative on providing information on CAAFAG.

The community still regard issues concerning CAAFAG as being the sole responsibility of organisations rather than for society as a whole. Moreover the LPC is unaware of its potential role on this issue and the political parties are disinterested. Coordination between the line agencies is very poor but perceived to be good among NGOs. Additionally, without a comprehensive mapping study there is the danger that errors are being duplicated and lessons learnt are not being shared, i.e. the interviewee from HimRights stated that some CAAFAG from wealthy backgrounds were receiving help while others from humbler backgrounds have not received anything.

There is a need to orient, strengthened and empower the District Child Welfare Board (DCWB), LPC, and Village Child Protection Committee (VCPC) to work and act together on this issue.

UNICEF, Red Cross, the Fatima Foundation, and UNESCO have all played a role here, but there has not been any prolonged and sustained intervention. 50-60 CAAFAG have been supported, but there is no authentic data on the total number of CAAFAG in the district. The INSEC interviewee believed that many CAAFAG, perhaps between 20-30% of the total CAAFAG in the area had not come forward yet. Many do not like to be introduced as CAAFAG and want to settle their situation independently and 'quietly'. While some have reintegrated back into their communities, mistrust is still widely prevalent between the community and CAAFAG, many of whom have left for India. Female CAAFAG continue to face greater societal animosity than male CAAFAG.

A number of recommendations were given, including: identifying CAAFAG, providing educational and skill-based support in line with the needs of the person, such as taking into account different age considerations. Psychosocial counselling should be the priority and the LPC should be strengthened and given responsibility for CAAFAG issues.

Bardiya District

Sundar Nepal Sanstha (BNA) is working with UNICEF covering 12 Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the district on this issue,

and have previously worked with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Support has been given in a number of ways, including: education, vocational training, IGA, psychosocial counselling and gender specific support. To deliver the psychosocial support, all BNA staff have received 28 days training from UNICEF. IGA and vocational training were deemed to be effective here. However, organisations working with and for CAAFAG have been accused of bias and not working for other people who were affected by the war.

CAAFAG have easily reintegrated back into their communities due to 'support and other activities conducted from their schools.' Also, prejudice against female CAAFAG is reported as declining. CAAFAG were portrayed here as 'knowing everything' and signs of political training often remain in their outlook. Their attitudes towards teachers and NGOs were initially very negative. They are seen by some as expecting and demanding too much from organisations.

There has been no in-depth study or survey on the total number of CAAFAG in the district. Furthermore, there needs to be further vocational classes and more resources and expertise to deal with severe psychosocial cases.

Morang District

INSEC does not have any direct program in this district for CAAFAG, but in the course of monitoring, both INSEC and the Advocacy Forum, referred cases to CWIN and UNICEF. There is no database on CAAFAG, although UNICEF was said to maintain all data. Furthermore, mapping is extremely difficult owing to many CAAFAG leaving their hometowns. Only general observations were given.

It was unclear what support has been given to CAAFAG here, but it was stated that coordination between agencies was good, but that budgetary and time constraints hampered efforts. It was deemed that project-based activities and solely outside support cannot give long-term solutions. Rather, needs-based and long-term support are needed to support CAAFAG in the 'real sense'; and CAAFAG need

greater support at the local level. A Peace Committee should have responsibility for these issues. There is the question of sustainability and the need for the state to be more active on this issue.

Makwanpur District

260 CAAFAG have been reached. CWS and HimRights have been working together and with CAAFAG here. CWS is working with UNICEF in all 43 VDCs. Support has been provided in a number of ways, including broadly speaking: education, IGA, vocational training, emergency health, gender specific support and psychosocial counselling. With regards to the latter, psychosocial counsellors have been working at the district and local levels, the former have received 6 months of training and the latter have received 28 days. CWS also provides psychosocial counselling but cannot deal with all the cases owing to a deficiency in training. This deficiency was explained here. HimRights have conducted public hearings on the issue of CAAFAG, submitted a report to concerned stakeholders and conducted an art workshop. However, as with other districts, there has not been any in-depth study on the number of CAAFAG.

CAAFAG were depicted here as expecting too much from organisations to solve their problems, even those taking place in their families. This is 'impossible' to achieve through local organisations. In addition, the attachment of many CAAFAG still to their mother organisations (i.e. political parties) and the trouble of securing funds from donors for CAAFAG-specific work present great challenges here. Indeed, initiatives have been starved of money, which has affected the standard of support CWS can provide. The state is 'completely indifferent to the issue', and the DCWB and LPC are just a 'formality' here. The DCWB and the government at the centre and in the localities need to be more active and responsible.

Tanahu District

There appears to have been little or no work with CAAFAG in this district. There has been no proper assessment of the number of

CAAFAG in the district. Local level organisations, the media, and NGOs and stakeholders have been working on various aspects relating to conflict with good coordination, but with little effect particularly with CAAFAG. Children Nepal has no programmes with CAAFAG. INSEC have been working on monitoring UN Security Council Resolution 1612, and have identified 50 CAAFAG. Programs were designed with different stakeholders at the local level for their social reintegration but were not implemented.

Arghakhanchi District

OTCDC in partnership with UNICEF and Save the Children have been implementing CAAFAG-specific programs covering all the VDCs. Support is focused on education and IGA. Most of the CAAFAG have reintegrated back into society. Psychosocial cases here are minimal, if found they are referred to the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), an organisation which works in this field. However, the INSEC representative claimed that programs are not addressing the 'real' problems, and were deemed to be failing to help those from marginalized communities, 'who were mostly involved in the insurgency.'

Although SISEC has identified ten case studies of CAAFAG, there needs to be a fuller identification of CAAFAG numbers, who should then be provided with support in education, skill training, IGA and psychosocial counselling. An integrated approach needs to be adopted working from the district level down.

ii. Government Organisations

Kanchanpur District

DCWB has recorded 259 CAAFAG in the district, although there is no authentic and detailed data available. The CDO office does not keep a database. Political parties claim that there are 500 CAAFAG in the district. DCWB has been conducting referral services, and claimed that there is good communication and coordination between those organisations working with CAAFAG. The interviewee perceived that

existing project-based initiatives and poorly funded government units meant that current efforts are not going to create any sustainable and lasting results. No organisation is concentrating on the psychosocial aspect of CAAFAG support.

CAAFAG need long-term support and special consideration should be given to allow them to be engaged in government services. LPC and VDCs have been formed and have the potential to work effectively on this issue.

Kailali District

CDO office has no information on CAAFAG numbers or support they may have received, and is not working with CAAFAG. There is no coordination with any other stakeholders, and the government has not given them any instructions on CAAFAG, and CAAFAG themselves have been reluctant to come forward. There is a need to collect data on CAAFAG so as to identify their needs.

Banke District

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LPC has no program working with CAAFAG and no information on them. The interviewee stated that issue of CAAFAG has not been the agenda of their meeting. The Child Rights Officer stated that there were no programs or any information on CAAFAG.

Makawanpur District

There have been discussions about CAAFAG in the meetings of the DCWB, and a decision was made to coordinate with the LPC on issues around CAAFAG, and to establish a referral mechanism. However, regular changes in staff at the LPC and CDO have hampered efforts. This turnover in staff and its effect was further reflected in the school system, where an acting headmaster stated that he did not 'have much idea and knowledge on former CAAFAG since he was new.' However, the expectations of CAAFAG were perceived to be unrealistic.

Many CAAFAG are working abroad and others are being 'misused' by

cross-border criminals. Frustration is high amongst this group despite the various initiatives conducted by organisations. Implementing need-based support initiatives could bring about substantial changes to their lives and focusing on education should be the future priority for policymakers.

Arghakhanchi District

The District Education Officer stated that there was no specific program or support for CAAFAG. However programs are continuing for children affected by conflict. The Chief District Officer stated similarly that while there is educational support for children, there is nothing specific for CAAFAG. However a School Inspector stated that 20-30 CAAFAG have passed their SLC with support from existing programs.

LPCs are not working on this issue and the government is not providing any directives on this issue. DWCO does not provide any support for CAAFAG. DDC has programs for children affected by conflict but nothing specific for CAAFAG. However the DCC representative stated that responding to need, the organisation intended to adapt and undertake a more integrated and collaborative approach.

Tanahu District

28 CAAFAG were contacted, but have since fallen out of contact. DCWB discusses the issue of CAAFAG and is seeking to work with organisations such as CWIN, who possess the required technical skills to work with CAAFAG.

iii. Focused Group Discussion with former CAAFAG

Kanchanpur District

The reasons behind why CAAFAG individuals joined the insurgency varied, but can be compartmentalised into two categories: voluntarily and involuntarily. In the latter case, many children were abducted from their homes and schools. Upon reflection, the

interviewees felt that they were 'not mature enough to adjudge right and wrong' at the time, and were unconcerned about their futures.

During the war, CAAFAG persons were given many different tasks, which included: sentry duty, manufacture of propaganda materials, and carrying documents and goods. At all times CAAFAG persons were in direct contact with their commanders and political leaders. While some fled, others were arrested by the national army while trying to flee.

By participating in the conflict, CAAFAG persons forewent an education, and today are struggling to continue their education. The interviewees, whilst certainly highlighting the negative impacts that arose from affiliation with the insurgency, also spoke of positive impacts. They 'learnt many things' and believe that the voices and concerns of minorities – 'lower castes and marginalized' – to some extent have been heard and acted upon by the state. Indeed their status in society has improved, and they are more aware of their rights.

Kailali District

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The war was acknowledged to have had many negative impacts on children. Many lost their parents, and missed the opportunity to attend school. Upon the conclusion of the war, communities and families were hostile to the idea of CAAFAG returning. Antagonism and blame have been placed on CAAFAG persons who earned an income whilst many others struggled. However, there have been slight improvements since the beginning of the peace process. Some have rejoined schools with the support of the Red Cross, and others have obtained vocational training and IGA. However, those CAAFAG members who are illiterate face extreme problems in obtaining a livelihood.

Despite the existing support, further assistance is needed. It appears that a huge number of CAAFAG have not been supported by any organisation and this must change.

Rautahat District

The respondents stated that they were 'unable to judge the impact of conflict upon the people like us.' They joined either because of 'desire' or through 'compulsion'. There was a sense of regret in the choice they made, and this regret has been sharpened when CAAFAG look at the success of their contemporaries who had a comparatively more comprehensive education. Tensions amongst and between families were high, and resentment towards participation was strong in some cases. CAAFAG in communities also feel that they are portrayed negatively and continually laughed at. However, 'currently we do not have any problem within family and [the] community is also becoming positive to us gradually.' Many CAAFAG believe that due to their poor educational background their chances of obtaining work are slim. It was stated that some CAAFAG have received support which has given 'some sort of relief.'

Bardiya District

The interviewees all joined armed group voluntarily from their school. Their action was motivated by the desire to remove injustice, and tackle the threat posed by the state in the form of the army and the police. They were 'guided by a beautiful philosophy transforming society and create a society where there is just, equality, development, and participation... [We] contributed as much as we could'. During their period in the Maoist army, CAAFAG were involved in different tasks as per the orders given to them.

The interviewees noted that it was challenging to readjust back into the norms of society, but thought that the situation was improving. Furthermore, the loss of access to education, their 'golden age', and the 'love and affection of the family and society', have had deleterious effects on them. The problems they fought for have not been solved, and with no income, education, skills, or employment the future looks uncertain.

The community is still not completely positive towards CAAFAG and they have received no support from the government or from

organisations. Support is needed for vocational training, small entrepreneurship initiatives and employment opportunities.

Dhankuta District

Children from Dhankuta were highly active in the armed conflict: 'over 40% of the people used were children... 10% of those children were forced into taking up arms and fighting battles.' Many were utilised as messengers. Three reasons were given for why they joined the armed group/force. Firstly, some joined voluntarily, motivated by the poor economic situation faced by their families. Secondly, others were coerced/influenced by talk of ideology and emancipation from caste discrimination. And thirdly, others were victims of abduction or were forced to join. One of the interviewees stated that 'I felt much [more] secure' when in the army. It was only women on sentry duty who experienced any troubles; otherwise there was no discrimination against them.

Social reintegration has been, and remains difficult. People blame every 'Maoist' for their home and land confiscations and abductions. Female CAAFAG face many social prejudices. Whilst any 'negative development in the political arena' is latched onto by the community who remain resentful and say, 'is this the change that you fought for?' Social stigma was quantified as being over 50%, although things are improving because of the support that has been received. They have met VDC members and feel that there is progress on the issue 'that we are victims and not perpetrators.' Nonetheless, the interviewees stated that psychological difficulties were a real problem, and nightmares about the war, are gravely affecting their ability to focus and concentrate at school.

Support has been given for education, but only up to School Leaving Certificate (SLC). It would be better if support were provided to at least +2 high school education, even if this just meant funds were available to pay the admission fee. Some CAAFAG have received vocational training depending on their interest. Fundamentally though, support has not been universally provided or received. They

are still some CAAFAG who are left out, and further support and guidance is a necessity.

Banke District

Some of the CAAFAG joined voluntarily, some due to pressure and compulsion. Two respondents here joined voluntarily in order to fight injustice and discrimination inflicted on the so-called lower castes. Each felt that they learnt from the experience and acknowledged the negative aspects of participation, i.e. no education. Another interviewee stated that they were abducted from school and that his family was threatened because he had run away from the group. During his time with the armed group he felt exploited and considered that he had been too young to understand the significance of his actions.

The interviewees had all been in contact with CWIN, and had received educational, medical and IGA support, and on one occasion had received some food provisions. Social integration was problematic at first, but now to an extent there have been some improvements. However this does not indicate that the problems have been solved. Support is still needed. Current support efforts have been insufficient to bring any noticeable change to their lives. What is needed is further support for education, advanced level vocational training and employment. The respondents felt that the current attitude exhibited by organisations appears to be that 'something is better than nothing.'

Kathmandu

Only one interview was conducted. The interviewee is currently volunteering at CWIN, helping in the documentation process, and is working with 'CWIN skills' and is studying for a Bachelors degree. The respondent came to Kathmandu to study and because his/her home was not conducive to stay and study.

In speaking behind the reason why children and youth joined the insurgency, the interviewee stated that everybody was joining, so

'we' joined also. Children and youth 'were immature' but 'were not forced' to join. During her affiliation, work involved comprising and distributing propaganda to the public, working in the medical department, raising donations, delivering threatening letters to the army/police hierarchy, making home-made bombs, using weapons, and fighting battles. They continually faced a culture of indoctrination.

The participant was later arrested by the army during a battle and imprisoned for a month. ICRC made contact and referred her to CWIN. After completing the SLC she went home. Without any financial support her employment aspirations are being hindered. CWIN is currently providing support for her family and educational situation.

4. Conclusion

The process of providing support to CAAFAG has been complicated and bound with political concerns. Only the minimum support has been provided to CAAFAG who left their posts before the signing of the CPA. Many of these children and youth have through fear of being ostracized or extra-judicial punishment fled their places of origin. In many cases this has meant leaving their families. Combined with a prevailing culture of stigmatization the majority do not register themselves as either CAAFAG or IDPs. For these children and youth there is an evident fear of reprisal from peers associated with the armed group that the child fled from. In addition many have experienced trauma from their experience which manifests in learning or social difficulties and in some cases more extreme forms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Access to a holistic and staged support for psycho-social recovery and social reintegration and reconciliation is still limited in Nepal. In most cases these children and youth will not have had opportunity to fully exercise their right to education and do not have the vocational skills or opportunities to embark on a productive livelihood strategy. In an environment where there is a trend in the formation of armed groups whose purpose may be banditry or political, former child soldiers are particularly 'at risk' of joining such groups which may threaten the stability established in peripheral regions in Nepal after the signing of the CPA.

A number of recommendations for strengthening policy frameworks and practical responses to address the psycho-social, family, community, and institutional challenges to effective reunification, reintegration and long-term development of children who fled armed forces and armed groups prior to the signing of the CPA have been suggested in the Executive Summary. These recommendations have attempted to address the importance of identifying both the extent and nature of the needs of CAAFAG. Additionally, possible roles and responsibilities are suggested, for both state and non-state actors, in supporting CAAFAG to have the opportunity to develop

their skills, knowledge and confidence, in order to be active and participating members of their communities. Issues relating to reintegration, stigmatisation and exclusion are also included in these recommendations. Fundamentally, it is not clear how many children of CAAFAG have been supported and the level of support remains unclear. The rights of children who fled from armed forces and armed groups, including the right to security, education and work, as well as the right to return to original residence, or settlement elsewhere, are all areas which need to be strengthened within policy and assistance planning. There is a clear need that those children psychologically affected by their experience of conflict are able to access appropriate counselling and support, and again, the research suggests serious deficiencies and inconsistencies exist in this provision.

Endnotes

- 1 At the time of the signing of the CPA in Nepal between the major political parties and the UCPN (Maoists) during November 2006, statistics from the Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups – CAAFAG - Working Group suggested that there are approximately 16,000 children, of both sexes below the age of 18 years (many of whom are now classified as youth) who have at one time or another been associated (utilised either as soldiers or in support roles) with armed forces and groups.
- 2 *UN Convention on the Right of the Child 1989 Articles 28 and 18.*
- 3 27 Districts of Nepal covering all five regions: **Eastern Region:** 1. Sunsari 2. Jhapa 3. Morang 4. Dhankuta **Central Region:** 5. Chitawan 6. Bara 7. Makwanpur 8. Parsa, 9. Rautahat 10. Kavre 11. Sindhupalchowk 12. Dolakha 13. Kathmandu Valley **Mid-Western Region:** 14. Banke 15. Dang 16. Bardia 17. Salyan 18. Rolpa 19. Rukum **Far Western Region:** 20. Kanchanpur 21. Kailali 22. Dadeldhura **Western Region:** 23. Kaski 24. Baglung 25. Argakhanchi 26. Tanahun 27. Lamjung