

THE
CARTER CENTER



Cover Note for Public Release of Carter Center Nepal Private Reports

October 2014

From 2009-2014, The Carter Center conducted a mission to report on Nepal's peace process and constitution drafting. Teams of national and international long-term observers were deployed in each of the country's five development regions. Over the course of the mission, the observations they produced were shared with the Nepali public and international stakeholders in a series of reports.

On a small number of occasions, the mission developed reports that were shared on a more targeted basis. These reports contained timely information about unfolding events that, because of limitations in the breadth or quality of data, combined with the potentially volatile nature of the subject matter at the time of their drafting, may not have been appropriate for general release. Many of the findings in these private reports were incorporated, with greater detail and better contextualization, into later public documents.¹

The Carter Center is now pleased to make these previously private documents available to the public. The reports are:

1. *Carter Center Observations on Discharged PLA Combatants*. July 23, 2010. In early 2010, Carter Center observers sought to interview former People's Liberation Army (PLA) combatants who had been discharged from the cantonments because they had joined the PLA as minors or after the signing of the May 25, 2006 Ceasefire Code of Conduct. The report summarizes findings from interviews with 20 discharged PLA and the close family members of two more. In addition, individual interview summaries are provided in an annex. As described on page two of the report, there are several important limitations to the data, most notably that nearly all interviews were conducted with PLA who had returned to their home villages. Therefore, the report may not reflect the experiences of PLA who did not return home or who enrolled in UN-sponsored vocational training following their discharge.
2. *Carter Center Observations on Recent Identity-Based Mobilization in Nepal*. June 8, 2012. As the May 27, 2012 deadline for promulgation of a new constitution approached, Nepal saw its most widespread identity-based political mobilizations in years. In many areas of the country there were extensive rallies, prolonged general strikes, and extended protest programs intended to pressure negotiators in Kathmandu, in particular over the role of identity in a future federal structure. In some regions, geographic overlap of competing protest programs led to tensions and clashes, as well as fears that disagreement over issues of identity would lead to wider communal rifts and potential violence. The report summarizes observer findings on these protests and highlights some notable dynamics. In addition, for this public release,

¹ In addition, a November 2009 report on Local Peace Committees that was shared privately with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and its international partners was made public in May 2011. It is available at: <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/nepal-051011.html>.

an annex is included of five situation reports that convey findings submitted by observer teams during the rapidly unfolding events of May 16 to May 29. These situation reports were shared privately with Carter Center contacts and contain information that was not possible to fully vet given the fluidity of events and the logistical difficulties caused by extended strikes.

The Center hopes these reports, which contain extensive observations on district and village-level events, will assist interested scholars and analysts in documenting and understanding Nepal's political transition. In addition, in May 2014, The Carter Center transferred all of the field observation data produced by Carter Center observers to Social Science Baha, an independent Nepali research institute. This information is housed in a searchable database and is available to the public.²

For more information on the Center's political reporting project in Nepal, please see *Political Transition Monitoring in Nepal, 2009-14: Final Report*.³ All Carter Center peace and constitutional reporting from Nepal is available at: http://www.cartercenter.org/news/publications/peace/democracy_publications/nepal-peace-reports.html.

² See: <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/nepal-091014.html>.

³ Available at: http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/nepal-2014-final.pdf.



Carter Center Observations on Discharged PLA Combatants

23 July 2010

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the limited observations of the Carter Center on discharged People's Liberation Army (PLA) combatants. The findings contained in this report reflect information gathered through direct interviews with 20 PLA combatants who went through the formal discharge process, two family members of formally discharged combatants, and three combatants who left the cantonments but were not formally discharged. Given the small and likely biased sample due to the Center's difficulty in locating discharged PLA to interview, this report should be taken only as a preliminary indication of the possible successes and challenges of the discharge process. The Center has compiled this report in the hopes that it can help to address ongoing issues related to the discharges and help indicate lessons learned or areas for future consideration in anticipation of the much larger rehabilitation process for many of the individuals still in the cantonments.

Summary of Findings:

- Among discharged PLA combatants and their communities, there appears to be a lack of understanding of the reasons for why they were discharged and unhappiness with the term "disqualified"
- Many ex-combatants feel unhappy with the discharge process, finding it "unfair" and feeling that they are left "with nothing"
- Neither the UCPN(M), the government, nor the UN seem to have effectively informed the discharged about why they were disqualified, and as a result some tend to blame the United Nations for their situation. A few blame the government and a smaller number blame the Maoists
- Some discharges face difficulties reintegrating back into society
- Many discharged PLA expressed dissatisfaction with the rehabilitation packages offered believing that they do not adequately address their economic concerns or guarantee employment.
- Contact between discharges and the UCPN(M) varies significantly across districts
- A majority of discharges intend to retain their party affiliation but they have no clear vision as to how
- There is little indication, despite concerns, that large numbers of discharges have joined armed or criminal groups or are otherwise engaged in criminal activity
- Return of discharged PLA is not seen as a major issue in most districts

Summary of Recommendations:

1. Inform discharged combatants clearly of the reason for their disqualification and eliminate the word "ayogya" from all materials referring to the discharged
2. Increase efforts to provide support to discharges so that they are not unintentionally penalized simply due to their having been recruited as minors
3. Consider greater support for assisting with integration into communities.
4. Examine how to make the rehabilitation packages more attractive, with a view towards the forthcoming rehabilitation process for qualified PLA
5. Set clear lines for international community engagement with the UCPN(M) that do not restrict the flow of information between international community representatives and those going through the rehabilitation process
6. Give early consideration to extending the February 2011 end date for accessing the rehabilitation package
7. Increase government engagement in, responsibility towards, and capacity to assist the process
8. Inform the UCPN(M) of concerns about access to the discharged and any credible allegations of violation of the Action Plan signed on December 16, 2009

B. BACKGROUND/METHODOLOGY

In early 2010, 2,973 combatants were officially disqualified from the PLA on the grounds that they were minors (under 18 or born after May 25, 1988) or late recruits, i.e. they entered the cantonments after the Ceasefire Code of Conduct was signed on May 25, 2006. Political deadlock enabled these combatants to remain in the PLA cantonments for over three years where they lived and trained with older PLA, many with the hope of being integrated into the Nepal Army. A two-step verification process carried out by UNMIN in late 2007 deemed them ineligible for integration. By the time they were discharged in 2010, many of the minors, likely the vast majority, were adults. Due to a lack of agreement on the packages that would be offered to disqualified individuals, the UCPN(M) “unilaterally” discharged the disqualified under United Nations supervision (both minors and late recruits were disqualified and subsequently discharged). The disqualified PLA returned home with minimal support: they received 10,000 NPR as part of their discharge package; some received an additional 12,000 NPR from the UCPN(M). The UN then made available modest training packages, for which the disqualified could access for up to one year, on their own initiative, by contacting a UN hotline phone number.

Between February and April 2010, Carter Center observers conducted 20 interviews with former PLA who had been formally discharged from the cantonments, two interviews with family members of formally discharged PLA, and three interviews with former PLA who had left the camps of their own accord. Of the 22 formally discharged individuals on which TCC gathered data, 16 were male and six were female. The majority of interviewees appeared to be disqualified because they were minors at the time of entry into the cantonments. Observers asked discharged combatants about their history in the UCPN(M), perceptions of the discharge process, current activities, and future plans. Observers also interviewed citizens, government officials, members of the UCPN(M) and other parties, and civil society representatives at the district and VDC levels to gauge their knowledge of, and attitudes toward, discharged PLA in their communities and the discharge process in general.

Important Limitations

In many districts, observers had difficulty locating discharged PLA. The main sources of difficulty were: low community awareness of discharges, the fact that many ex-combatants were away from their home villages, lack of assistance from the UCPN(M), and the strict respect for privacy by the UN and its partner organizations. In multiple districts, observers noted that the UCPN(M) was not supportive in facilitating meetings and some interlocutors alleged that the UCPN(M) was actively trying to prevent contact between formally discharged PLA and international community representatives. In two districts, party representatives interfered with Carter Center attempts to interview discharged combatants; in one district, three discharged PLA agreed to speak with observers but after checking with party superiors they subsequently refused. In other districts, party leaders offered assistance in locating discharged combatants and cooperated fully with Carter Center teams. Overall, as a result of these challenges, Carter Center observers were able to interview fewer discharged PLA than hoped.

Apart from the small sample size, there are several additional limitations to the data collected by the Carter Center. First, the sample was not chosen in a scientific manner and includes many combatants whom observers encountered in their home villages. Of 22 discharged combatants about which the Carter Center gathered information, all but two had returned to their homes; many discharges reportedly did not return home and the Carter Center does not have data on their whereabouts and activities. Additionally, the sample includes a very limited number of people who took part in the UN offered rehabilitation packages, at least at the time of the interviews. To respect privacy concerns of UN partners and avoid disrupting courses, we did not have access to and could not speak with discharged combatants who were enrolled in UN-sponsored vocational training.

C. DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Among discharged PLA combatants and their communities, there appears to be a lack of understanding of the reasons for why they were discharged and unhappiness with the term “disqualified.”

Few discharged combatants, their families, their neighbors, and even UCPN(M) representatives appeared to fully understand why combatants were discharged. When asked if they understood the reason for their discharge, some ex-combatants could only speculate. One interviewee said directly that he was discharged without explanation of the reason for it. Two others believed the UCPN(M) was required to release a certain number of combatants but were not certain what criteria were used to determine who would be discharged. A number of discharged combatants simply said they did not know the reason for their discharge; some termed it an UNMIN decision with unclear rationale. Community members also did not know the reason for the discharge and expressed concern over this. A shopkeeper said, “I feel sorry for those who were sent home. They joined the PLA to join the NA. We don’t know why they were disqualified. They didn’t deserve to be disqualified – and people who joined later were verified. It doesn’t seem right.” A student said he knew two disqualified PLA but one of them was “failed” because of his age and the other perhaps because he was too short.

Amid a lack of clear understanding of the criteria used for discharge, the terminology used to describe discharged combatants has become a source of confusion and unhappiness. The Nepali term *ayogya*, usually translated as “disqualified,” also carries a connotation of “failure” or being “unfit for military service.”¹ Some combatants complained that neighbors or family members believed they had “failed” in the cantonments. One interviewee said “[Disqualified] is not a good label. I shared many meals, battles, and guns with my friends to win the war. But some of us have called qualified and some disqualified. I feel sad and so do my friends who are still in the camps...” As discussed below, the perception that disqualified were discharged because of failure or inadequacy has made reintegration more difficult for some returnees.

Many ex-combatants feel unhappy with the discharge process, finding it “unfair” and feeling that they are left “with nothing.”

Many discharged combatants hoped to be integrated into the Nepal Army or other security bodies. Some feel they invested the prime of their youth in the PLA and have little to show for it. These ex-combatants experienced discharge as a sad event at best and, frequently, consider it a serious injustice. One interviewee said: “I am not happy with the process. This is not good, not fair. We were simply discharged without any arrangements. Our economic situation at home is also very poor...” Another said: “We fought for peace. We are now discharged as disqualified and returned home with nothing. It makes us feel bad.” Another simply said that the process of discharging him because he is underage “really hurts.”

The idea of the discharge process as being “unfair” and forcing disqualified PLA to return home “with nothing” was repeated in several interviews. It was also expressed by family, community members, and members of the Maoist party. For example, an NC district leader whose neighbor’s daughter-in-law had been discharged told the Carter Center that “as a Nepali” he felt she had been treated unfairly and unjustly. He noted that she personally had nothing to show for herself after being away from home for so long and fighting for the party. Additionally, a UCPN(M) district leader noted that the discharge process had “disappointed” the PLA and that they were feeling “stigma and humiliation” when they were called disqualified by their own family and community members. Another Maoist leader said that it was unfair that, after fighting during the armed conflict, some people were now being disqualified by UNMIN on grounds such as health or height. He thought was natural for them to be dissatisfied as people with whom they had fought side by side will be getting positions where they draw a large

¹ The term *ayogya* appears in Article 4.1.3. of the Nepali version of the Agreement on the Monitoring of Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA), signed by the government and the Maoists on 8 December 2006; in the English version, which was also signed by the government and the Maoists, the word *ayogya* is translated as “ineligible”.

monthly salary, while they themselves have been discharged with nothing to secure their future.

Neither the UCPN(M), the government, nor the UN seem to have effectively informed the discharged about why they were disqualified, and as a result some tend to blame the United Nations for their situation; a few blame the government and a smaller number blame the Maoists.

Neither the Maoists nor the government appear to have effectively informed the discharged about why they were disqualified. The Maoists also appear not to have informed ex-combatants who would be disqualified until soon before the discharge process took place. The government had no contact with the ex-combatants during the discharge process because it was handled “unilaterally” by the Maoists. Moreover, UN access to combatants prior to discharge was reportedly highly limited; the UN was allegedly restricted by the UCPN(M) to minimal, and supervised, access to the ex-combatants during the discharge process. This made it difficult, if not impossible, for the UN to inform ex-combatants on the reason for the discharge during the process itself. However, pamphlets provided to discharged combatants contained information about the UN hotline for the rehabilitation package also included some information regarding why individuals were discharged.

To avoid the frustration and anger of many ex-combatants, the UCPN(M) appears to have deflected responsibility from the party to the UN, thereby increasing resentment against the international community's role in verification and discharge. Although some ex-combatants hold the government or the Maoists responsible for their discharge to some degree, the principal target of their anger is most often UNMIN. As one ex-combatant put it, “UNMIN discharged us as disqualified... Our party did not disqualify us. At the time [of discharge] a fight could easily have erupted with the UNMIN personnel but our party had convinced us to assist in the peace process, so we did. We won't forget our party.” Another interviewee said, “Only UNMIN uses that label [disqualified]. No one else has given me embarrassment by labeling me as disqualified.” Three interviews directly noted that they blamed the UN for their current situation. A third said, “The UN forced us to return home but our minds are still in the cantonments.” In one district, a local Maoist representative repeated this sentiment, saying that ex-PLA members thought they were sent out of the camps to meet a “discharge percentage” and that they were unhappy, and blamed UNMIN for not disclosing the reason for discharge.

While UNMIN was the considered by most ex-PLA to be responsible for their discharge, a few blamed the government. Two ex-PLA combatants also believed that the government to “take care” of the discharged. One former combatant said that “the state must take good care of us. I would be thankful to you if you could take my message to them”; while another said that “the (Maoists) and government should take care of us.”

Some discharges also blame the UCPN(M) but resentment against the party appears limited. Maoist leaders in several districts said that discharged combatants were disappointed in the party for not opposing the discharge. One discharged PLA captured the sentiment well: “My opinion of the party has not much changed [since entering the cantonment]. It is almost the same. But I have a complaint against the party that it failed to take a strong enough stance in our favor during the qualification process.” A district-level Maoist representative said that the discharged had expressed their grievances and complaints with the party as they could not prevent the disqualification and did not do enough for them. Finally, in Kathmandu, rumors have circulated of discharged PLA sending threatening messages to their leaders for their failure to take care of them.

Some discharges face difficulties reintegrating back into society.

One-quarter of the discharges interviewed (5 of 20) have reportedly faced difficulties reintegrating into civilian life. An additional two, for a total of seven, described minor difficulties. Five of the seven mentioned that family or neighbors “talk behind our back,” accuse the disqualified combatants of having “failed,” or say that they spent years away from home and returned with nothing to show; the father of a sixth said his son was “disappointed and frustrated” by the reactions of his neighbors, few of whom were Maoist supporters; and the seventh appeared

unprepared for civilian life. In one case, a dischargee spent less than 24 hours at home before leaving the district because, he said, his neighbors did not receive him well and his family accused him of having left for years but returned with nothing. In another case, a dischargee told the Center “My family and neighbors have treated me well. I am not happy in my situation, though; I left the cantonment against my will. I feel better at the cantonment than at home.”

Civil society organizations and Maoist party members were also concerned about reintegration difficulties the discharged PLA might face, although it was not always clear whether these concerns were based on actual experiences or predictions of possible problems. One journalist who had interviewed several dischargees noted that ex-combatants faced reintegration difficulties due to: inter-caste marriages which took place during the conflict and may not be honored by families upon return; ex-combatants feeling insecure in their communities when they return; and ex-combatants not being accepted by their families for returning after several years with nothing to show for their effort. A civil society member noted that female former PLA members have even more difficulty to settle back into their communities because of conservative norms and values. A district-level UCPN(M) leader was concerned that the sudden change in living environment and decrease in status could create challenges for ex-combatants. Finally, a Maoist leader in another district said that meeting family expectations will be a major challenge for ex-combatants, as most of them are from poor families who will be disappointed when they are unable fulfill economic expectations and contribute to the family’s income.

Some civil society organizations were reported to be assisting dischargees. However, no interviewees were receiving assistance focused exclusively on reintegration into their communities. The Center met or heard of at least three organizations on the ground that aimed to assist discharged combatants: BASE, Rural Reconstruction Nepal, and Peace Action Group. One ex-combatant stated clearly, “I have received support from BASE. One woman in my village worked for BASE and she told me that they could help me.” However, there appear to be few to no efforts to assist combatants to reintegrate into their communities. Assistance is heavily focused on education and vocational training. Some ex-combatants, their families, and neighbors could have benefited from education or counseling prior to reintegration and follow-up contacts after.

Many discharged PLA expressed dissatisfaction with the rehabilitation packages offered believing that they do not adequately address their economic concerns or guarantee employment.

Many discharged PLA said they were not happy with the rehabilitation packages that were being offered. Several noted that financial and economic concerns were of greater importance and the packages did not address these issues. Essentially, they were worried about their future now that they could not be integrated into the security forces, and did not believe the packages were sufficient to take care of them. One ex-combatant said, “We are not happy with the packages offered to us. We boycotted those offers right away. There’s no meaning of going for these packages. We won’t contact the UN for trainings. This cannot guarantee our life...There should be some kind of basis or arrangement that would secure our future. Some of our friends do not have enough food at home, or even money to buy clothes and shoes. Rather than these packages we should be provided some land in the Tarai.” Another woman said that her future was dark and she did not know what she would do. A young man said, “...It would have been good to be discharged with other arrangements, like economic support because the economic situation at home is not good.”

Other ex-combatants were unhappy due to the lack of respect they saw in the packages or what they believed to be the inappropriate nature of the packages. This was echoed by UCPN(M) representatives as well. One ex-combatant said, “The government gave a small package but it is not enough for me. Many of my comrades lost their lives. The package will be meaningless unless we achieve the goals of the revolution.” A group of discharged PLA (accompanied during the interview by a UCPN(M) representative) said: “We feel humiliated by the package provided by the government, especially the vocational trainings. We have already acquired skills in carpentry and electro mechanics...All discharged PLA want their contribution to the transformation of Nepali

society to be acknowledged by the government, rather than any of their packages or programs.” This was repeated by a Maoist representative in one of the cantonments, who said that discharged combatants were unhappy with the packages saying that becoming “barbers and bicycle mechanics” is an insult to their “sacrifice for the nation” and that combatants had expectations of receiving positions of higher importance in the views of their communities.

However, some ex-combatants expressed positive feelings towards the packages and a number expressed an interest in pursuing the packages. One person said, “We are offered some packages from the UN. I am good with this. Maybe others feel bad with it. However, it is clearly not sufficient. I am the eldest daughter in the family. There’s nobody in the family earning. So, it would be good to get any of the packages.” Another noted that his wife was doing a tailoring training and that she was happy with the counseling she received from the UN. However, he said that he was not happy about the training options offered. He had wanted to do a driving course but after finding out that a government driving job was not guaranteed he chose not to. He did note that if there had been training for large equipment operation (such as bulldozers) he would have been interested in such a course. Other suggestions for possible courses that would make the packages more attractive included a computer skills training and security guard training. At least two other interviewees planned to seek training by the UN; two more had the UN hotline number but had not called and/or were not interested to pursue the option.

Several ex-combatants interviewed noted plans to go to school again. One expressed concern about how he would pay for his education, saying: “I have spent all the money that was given by UNMIN and the party. Now I don’t have any money left. I’m quite concerned about how I will continue my further study since my family does not support me. Therefore, I am not all happy. But I’m quite happy that I have got to take my SLC exams. Anyhow I want to continue the study. I want to study biology and want to become a medical doctor.”

Finally, two sources noted that they thought the Maoists might be disparaging the packages or preventing ex-combatants from accessing them. One was an interviewee who cited a meeting with a PLA leader prior to her discharge in which she was discouraged from talking to outsiders or taking up the UN packages. Additionally, one civil society member speculated that the PLA leadership was “confusing” discharges about the packages. When he approached the ex-combatants to provide access to the packages, most of them responded that they would have to talk to their party first.

Contact between discharges and the UCPN(M) varies significantly across districts.

UCPN(M) district level representatives reported that the party does not have a clear national policy regarding contact with discharged PLA.² A party leader in one district said there was no central policy apart from “creating a favorable environment” for discharges and allowing them to work with the party, if they were interested. In another district, a Maoist representative said his only central instruction was to provide advice and non-material support to any discharges who requested it. One Maoist representative in a third district lamented this lack of central policy, saying that he strongly felt the party had an obligation to secure the future of the ex-combatants and compared the party’s responsibility to that it had for martyrs’ families. Despite the lack of central level policy, most seemed to believe that the discharged would remain engaged with the party in some way.

It appeared to Carter Center observers that party structures at the district level were able to exercise significant discretion on how they chose to engage with ex-combatants, and that there were large variations across districts in the degree and type of contact between discharges and the party. In two districts, the UCPN(M) organized welcome programs in the district headquarters to greet returning combatants; in a third district, Maoist leaders said welcome programs were held in some but not all VDCs. In two districts, Maoist representatives told

² This is in line with other Maoist policies (such as those regarding land return) which appear to be determined by the district and local level, with some overall guidelines coming from the national level as needed.

observers that discharges had been given a one month “leave period” from the party but were expected to be in contact subsequently. By contrast, in several districts, there did not appear to have been systematic attempts by the party to contact returned combatants.

While many interviewees seemed to indicate that discharged PLA were free to associate with the party or not as they chose, a small number noted significant pressure from the party on discharged PLA. Carter Center observers were unable to verify persistent reports in one district that discharged PLA were being pressured to rejoin the party. Several civil society sources believed that PLA who had rejoined were in a YCL camp while those who did not wish to rejoin were in “hiding” from the party. A senior journalist told observers that he also had difficulties finding discharged PLA despite repeated attempts, and used this as evidence that the discharged PLA were either being hidden by the UCPN(M) or were in hiding from the UCPN(M). In at least one instance the UCPN(M) appeared to provide inaccurate information to the Carter Center, saying that ex-combatants were not in contact with the party when in fact observers met three discharged PLA working as security or volunteers during a party event in the same district.

Additionally, at least two interviews indicate a concern that potentially some number of discharged PLA are facing undue pressure from the Maoist party to rejoin the party. In one district, a family described mounting pressure from the UCPN(M) to send their daughter, who had been discharged, to work in the party office in the district headquarters. During the same interview, the ex-combatant reported that after the UN finished the discharge process, the outgoing ex-combatants had a last closed session with their PLA commander in which they were threatened with party action if any of them should talk to any outside organization or outside observer. She also reported that they were also discouraged to take up any of the UN packages.

A second discharger from one district said that after discharge he was instructed by the party to join the YCL and YCL members repeatedly came to summon him for work. As a result, he did join the YCL but he was unhappy with his low rank in the organization, and left. He did not stay at his home because he feared the YCL would come looking for him again. Although observers did not encounter other similar cases, and such fears do not appear to be widespread, these reports give reason for concern that discharged combatants may face pressure from the UCPN(M) in particular districts.

Finally, in one district, reports of groups of discharged PLA living together caused concern in parts of the district. However, it appeared that this living arrangement was at the behest of the discharged, who had chosen not to return home, rather than of the party; observers found no indication that the discharged were being employed as a unit by the UCPN(M) though they did not have sufficient access to verify the credibility of this observation.

A majority of discharges intend to retain their party affiliation but they have no clear vision as to how.

Of the 20 discharged PLA interviewed, 14 intended to continue their affiliation with the UCPN(M). Interviews with family members of two more suggested that these ex-combatants would also continue with the party.

Most discharges who wished to stay involved in the party appeared to be in the early stages of thinking about the role they would play. No clear pattern emerged in the positions that discharges aspired to. Similarly, few party leaders had a clear vision of how ex-combatants would be incorporated into the party structure. Most commonly, party leaders said that discharges could join the party as any common citizen would.

Based on observer interviews alone, worries that there would be a systematic, nationwide effort to incorporate discharges into the YCL or other bodies can not be given credence. However, the Center was not able to get sufficient data to credibly verify this issue due to the small and biased sample of interviewees and the unreliability of the UCPN(M) as an information source. As noted above, most interviews do not indicate such activities by the UCPN(M), but a small number demonstrate reason for concern.

There is little indication, despite concerns, that large numbers of discharges have joined armed or criminal groups or are otherwise engaged in criminal activity.

Some district and village level interlocutors raised concerns that discharged combatants might be susceptible to recruitment by criminal or armed groups. This concern was expressed most commonly by UCPN(M) representatives, who mentioned the issue in multiple districts. In one district, a Maoist representative said he was “worried that if [discharged PLA] are not provided proper compensation and well looked after by the UN they will join the armed groups.” In another district, a district-level Maoist expressed commitment to engage the discharged within the party organization to prevent them from joining CPN-M Matrika Yadav or the Kirat Janawadi Workers Party. Maoist leaders in two districts expressed concern over to the fact that the discharged PLA are trained in the use of guns and explosives.

However, so far these concerns do not appear to have been borne out. None of the discharged combatants interviewed had joined any non-UCPN(M) organizations or groups (though the Center did find evidence of a small number of former PLA who were not formally discharged joining CPN-M Matrika Yadav.) Similarly, with the exception of CPN-Matrika efforts in some districts, we did not receive reports of recruitment by such organizations. A CPN-Matrika representative claimed to be “in touch” with a total of approximately 15 discharges from three Tarai districts. The party made a similar claim in a fourth Tarai district but declined to provide numbers. The credibility of these reports was not possible to assess.

In terms of criminal activities, observers heard allegations in three districts of discharged PLA becoming involved in illegal activities. In one district, three discharged PLA were suspected of beating up a UML party worker; in a second district, there were allegations of discharged PLA involved in “anti-social” activities including small clashes and that former PLA were collecting harvest shares from captured land; and in a third district, one discharged PLA was reportedly involved in looting money from a businessman. However, these incidents appear to be isolated in nature, related to unproven allegations, and likely do not distinguish between formally discharged PLA and those who left the camps voluntarily.

Return of discharged PLA is not seen as a major issue in most districts.

Although a range of interlocutors, mostly at the district level, expressed speculative concern about returning combatants, few believed these concerns were being borne out, and in nearly all districts PLA return was not seen as a major issue. Few political party members, civil society representatives, and government officials had taken an active interest in PLA return. In general, attitudes toward discharges ranged from positive to indifferent, including among members of the NC and other non-Maoist parties. A response by a VDC-level NC leader in one district was typical: “[PLA return] doesn’t matter to me. I do not have any anger toward them.”

The main exception was a District Administration Office (DAO) official in one Hill district who expressed interest in creating a file “with names and photographs” of discharged PLA so that victims of anticipated future incidents could identify their attackers. This view was not widespread, and most DAOs appeared to be open to the discharges, although the sentiment that the DAO should closely watch their activities was echoed in one other interview.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Inform discharges clearly of the reason for their disqualification and eliminate the word “ayogya” from all materials referring to the discharged. An information campaign could be conducted using FM radio news and public service announcement programs, introducing a discharged PLA character on popular radio dramas, creating a film that could be widely disseminated, issuing a government circular to all DAO and VDC offices, or through UN and/or NGO interaction programs with the discharged. The goal of this information campaign would be to clearly state why recruiting minors for service in armed groups is a violation of international law, that this is the reason that some individuals have been discharged from the cantonments, and that the government, Maoists, and UN are committed to supporting these individuals. It should be clear that these individuals were discharged through no fault of their own, and they are not “failures.” These programs should ensure that the Nepali language term used for “disqualified” is respectful and eliminate the word “ayogya” from all communications.
2. Increase efforts to provide support to disqualified minors so that they are not unintentionally penalized simply due to their status as minors. Though the packages for PLA combatants in the cantonments at present have not yet been agreed, discussions among the government, political parties, and international donors indicate that those packages may be more attractive than for those who have been disqualified. Should the discharged PLA be provided with a less attractive rehabilitation package in comparison to what individuals whom they consider to be their peers will have access, it will further sentiment among disqualified that they are being penalized. If these disqualified combatants are considered “children” and “victims”, they are due a higher standard of care as well as compensation and reparations for themselves and their families similar to that given to conflict-affected persons by the government; if they are considered “adults” and not victims, they should not be penalized as compared to their peers and should have access to the same opportunities.
3. Consider greater support for assisting with integration into communities. Such efforts should be based on a realistic assessment of the the needs of the returnees and of their communities. This means an acknowledgment that many minors joined the PLA voluntarily and that they may not be welcomed back to their families with open arms. These efforts could initially be focused on identifying vulnerable groups or locations in which to target programs, and then expanded to encompass larger numbers of communities. Psycho-social counseling should be made available to those individuals and families who could benefit from it. Moreover, constructive, non-political activities designed for youth – not solely for discharged PLA – could also facilitate social reintegration and promote community building. The Carter Center acknowledges that efforts on all of these fronts have been undertaken by multiple organizations -- international and national, for-profit and not-for-profit -- and recommends that these efforts be well-coordinated to ensure that there are no gaps or duplication of efforts.
4. Examine how to make the rehabilitation packages more attractive, with a view towards the forthcoming rehabilitation process for qualified PLA. Greater emphasis should likely be placed on addressing economic and employment concerns, either through an employment market assessment or job placement scheme for those participating in the rehabilitation package trainings. Moreover, given the negative perception among some discharged PLA about the rehabilitation package, it would be useful to find ways to make the packages more attractive, especially in advance of these packages being offered to the qualified combatants. If possible, one way to do this would be a survey of both ex-combatants who are currently engaged in using the packages and those who are not, to learn more about their experiences. This will require willingness on the part of the UN system to facilitate access to these individuals, or to conduct such a study itself. Finally, consideration should also be given to providing financial support to individuals who have enrolled in school.

5. Give early consideration to extending the February 2011 end date for accessing the rehabilitation package. Given that many discharged PLA have not accessed the package as of yet, and should efforts to make the package more attractive be undertaken, consideration should be given sooner rather than later to extending the end date for enrolling in a rehabilitation package program. There should be due consideration to ensuring that facilities and trainers are secured for an extended period, if necessary. Moreover, it is unlikely that all 4,008 disqualified PLA combatants will take up the rehabilitation package as individuals may have left the country, unilaterally enrolled in school, or gained employment. Efforts should be undertaken to determine the status of discharged PLA who have not contacted the UN hotline and do not intend to do so.
6. Set clear lines for international community engagement with the UCPN(M) that do not restrict the flow of information between international community representatives and those going through the rehabilitation process. The international community should avoid supporting any program in which they are not given free and unfettered access to the recipients of that program, both while in the cantonments and outside; this is particularly relevant for discharge of qualified combatants. Moreover, the Carter Center is concerned about allegations that misinformation is being provided by the Maoists to combatants about the rehabilitation packages being offered so as to dissuade ex-combatants from accessing them. The international community's financial support and recognition of any future process remains a strong point of leverage which can be used to ensure access to potential beneficiaries.
7. Increase government engagement in, responsibility towards, and capacity to assist the process. The government appears absent from both the discharge process and the rehabilitation process. This is unfortunate, as many discharged PLA seek recognition and respect from the government, and the government bears a direct interest in the outcome of this process. Greater efforts are needed to assist or convince the government to increase its visibility and positive engagement in the process.
8. Inform the UCPN(M) of concerns about access to the discharged and any credible allegations of violation of the Action Plan signed on December 16, 2009. The UCPN(M) should be informed of concerns about lack of access to the discharged as well as the finding that many discharged do not know the reason for their disqualification. Additionally, any and all credible allegations of violations of the Action Plan should be raised directly with the UCPN(M) leadership.

ANNEX: Former PLA Interviews

In order to assist readers of this paper in fully understanding and analyzing the limited data collected by The Carter Center, we have included summaries of the interviews done by observer teams around the country. Information regarding which districts the interviews took place in as well as all identifying details (age, caste, etc) has been omitted. A few relevant notes for context:

- We have included a note at the top of the interview summary, wherever relevant, in cases where other people were present at the interview (in four cases family members were present, and in two cases Maoist or Matrika party members were present).
- Some of the interviews are written in first person while others have been summarized by the Carter Center observers who conducted the interviews. All direct quotes are indicated by quotation marks.
- In some cases, we have filled in missing parts of a sentence using brackets to help readers understand the flow of the conversation, or to indicate when the response was an answer to a question asked by Carter Center observers.
- The information below is from interviews with former PLA and their families only. Other interviews (such as those conducted with community members, Maoist party members, neighbors, and district administration officials) are not included in this annex but are summarized in the white paper.

INTERVIEWS WITH FORMALLY DISCHARGED PLA MEMBERS (#1-18)

Interview #1

Gender: Female

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 1 month

Date of interview: 28 February 2010

“Yes. This is my husband’s house. Where do I stay if not in my home? My parent’s house is in [another district]. The address given to UNMIN is of my parent’s house. My other friends are also returned and staying at their homes in this village.”

“Although we have not faced any particular challenge from our family or village we still face many challenges after our return. Villagers might not talk directly to us but they still talk behind our back and question why we have ‘failed.’ This annoys us. The society will not easily accept our arrival after sacrificing our time and effort for nothing. We are not happy with the situation, don’t have anything to live our lives by. Our future is not guaranteed even though we were promised many things.”

“We don’t have anything on hand to do for our future. Neither can we continue our study after such a long gap nor can our skills be applied at home. At the moment I don’t have any plans.”

“UNMIN discharged us as disqualified. There are people qualified by UNMIN but they actually don’t know how to operate a gun. This is ridiculous. We know why UNMIN did this. However, our party did not disqualify us. At the time, a fight could have easily erupted with the UNMIN guys, but our party had convinced us to assist in the peace process, so we did. We won’t forget our party. We’ll wait to see what it does for us. So, we won’t go far from our party. We will be ready for the 2nd round of movement/revolution if needed.”

“My friends have also returned home after they were discharged. Most are angry about it. Some are planning to appear in the grade 8th examination this year. I don’t think they will join any other group. At least I haven’t heard about it. If they would join Matrika [CPN-M Matrika Yadav party], they will still face the same problems. They will still have to be able to look after themselves and provide for their families. I certainly will not go anywhere.”

“We are not happy with the packages offered to us. We boycotted those offers right away. There’s no meaning of going for these packages. We won’t contact the UN for trainings. This cannot guarantee our life. We wanted to serve our nation, but we were discharged. Initially they told us, they will drop us up to our home, then they only took us up to [a different place] and then were discharged with nothing but Rs 10.000. Some of our friends are from [a Mountain district], the 10.000 Rs will already be spent on the way. There should be some kind of basis or arrangement that would secure our future. Some of our friends do not have enough food at home, or even money to buy clothes and shoes. Rather than these packages we should be provided some land in Tarai. Look around, there is nothing you can do here.”

Interview #2

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 1 month

Date of interview: 1 March 2010

“Yes. I came here in my village straight from the cantonment. There are 6-7 people from this VDC who returned after the discharge.”

“I am received well by my family and village. Everyone treats me well at home and in the village. No challenges faced. My friends might face challenges, but we have not discussed that yet. I am not happy with the process. This is not good, not fair. We were simply discharged without any arrangements. Our economic situation at home is also very poor. My parents have become old and I am the eldest son.”

“I left my school at grade 8, couldn’t continue with my studies. However, I am planning to join school again. While we were at school, the army would come and disturb us. Even in school there was no environment to study at the time. So, I joined the Maoists.”

“We will be in touch with the party even while staying home. We will assist the party.”

“My friends have also returned to their homes. They are just staying at home.”

“It would have been good to be discharged with other arrangements, like economic support (money) because the economic situation at home is not good. [I blame the UN for this situation.]”

Interview #3

Gender: Female

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 1 month

Date of interview: 1 March 2010

“Yes. I came here in the village straight from the cantonment. My friends have also returned to their homes.”

“My family is happy to see me. Some people received us well. [But] there are some comments about us like ‘returned after being failed, what can she do now?’”

“I will join the school again in grade 8. I studied in [another district] too. I couldn’t attend school, but appeared in the exam. We are offered some packages from the UN. I am good with this. Maybe others feel bad with it. However, it clearly is not sufficient. I am the eldest daughter in the family. There’s nobody in the family earning. So, it would be good to get any of the packages.”

“I joined the PLA four years ago when I was studying in grade 6. We have not yet made contact with the party. However, we often meet with the party people and friends since the party office is located close to my house.

We'll assist the party in its activities in future.”

“The role played by our party in the peace process is very positive. The role of UN and government is not good.”

“We fought for peace. We are now discharged as disqualified and returned home with nothing. It makes us feel bad. We have to leave our friends in cantonment. However, we'll forget our sorrows if the peace process moves forward in right direction.”

Interview #4

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: about 2 months

Date of interview: 9 March 2010

This was not his home village. After discharge, he was instructed by the party to join the YCL. He joined it, but he found that there were juniors and people who were not associated with the party during the conflict in high positions. He was dissatisfied and frustrated that despite the sacrifices he made as a whole-timer, he would have to start from scratch. He worked for three days as YCL after the YCL repeatedly came to summon him. But after the three days, he left for Kathmandu. He did not stay at home because he feared the YCL would come looking for him again, but he had not been threatened or harassed.

Though villagers made some comments about him being ‘thrown away’ by the party, there were no strong reactions from them. He did not face any significant challenge except he feared the YCL would come looking for him. He is not happy with his situation.

He joined the Maoists in about six years ago when he was still in grade 8. He does not plan to study but earn a living. He plans to get a training provided by the UN program repairing cycles and motorcycles. They have reportedly told him that they will contact him. He has a wife, another cantoned combatant who was qualified and is pregnant, and plans to make a normal living.

His sister, who was a whole-timer, was arrested and executed by the Nepal Army. He wanted to take revenge. He joined the PLA 6 years ago (2060 BS or 2003-04) and was involved in six major battles.

He does not plan to retain any affiliation with the party. In fact, he does not want to be affiliated or involved in any political party [or any group]. The discharged PLA were asked to join various sister organizations of the party. He also said that they had received some training about what they were to do when they left the camps. However, his position would be the same as someone just entering the party.

He clearly was not satisfied with the party. He believed they should have been treated better and their sacrifice to the movement better appreciated. However, he did not state specifically anything about the ideology of the party.

Interview #5

Gender: Male

Date of interview: 9 March 2010

He was stressed during the interview, asked several times how The Carter Center got his contact number and did not remember the person who provided it. The general impression was that of a person who left a well structured environment where he was guided for most of his tasks and finds himself now alone, with no clear plan for his future and all initiatives and decisions to be taken by himself.

He says that he was discharged without explanation of the reason for it. He is the only returning PLA in this

village, another lives in a neighboring VDC.

He seems frustrated, disappointed and abandoned by his party. He says that the villagers were unhappy with the lack of achievements of the PLA (including himself) and the party, but doesn't have problems to stay at home again.

He is waiting for a cook training of three months proposed by the UN. He is not interested in joining the YCL, as he considers them as inferior to the PLA with no serious training and activities.

He wished to be active for a better future of his country and joined the PLA nearly five years ago.

He is not in close contact with the party right now and is only called for some party programs. He said that if the constitution is not written, there is a chance that discharged PLA could take up arms again, since they silently agreed to be discharged from the cantonments as part of a successful constitution writing process.

He seems unhappy since he is with no clear project for his future and left alone after several years spent in a well structured environment. But even if angry with the Maoists, he doesn't plan to change party affiliation.

He is disappointed by all, the government, the UN and the Maoists for whom he invested his person and agreed to leave the camp as a part of the peace agreement, but did not get anything in return.

He does not seem in close contact with his old friends, but knows that two have rejoined school. Many seem unemployed.

Interviews #6, 7 & 8 (Group Interview – three discharged PLA present)

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since they left the cantonment: Approximately one month

Date of interview: 5 March 2010

NOTE: It is important to mention that the interviewed discharged PLA were accompanied by a UCPN-M district committee member (DCM). He was clearly there to control the discharged PLA during the conversation and make sure that no confidential information was shared. He appeared to be extremely skeptical of international agencies and we had to clarify the The Carter Center mandate several times. While the discharged PLA seemed to be keen to share some of their experiences and frustrations, the DCM's presence did not allow them to do so.

After the discharge process all PLA went back to their respective VDCs. The three PLA we interviewed were out of their 'home' VDCs to participate in a volleyball tournament organized by the UCPN-M in [a nearby VDC].

The UCPN-M welcomed them when they reached [their home district] and they spent a couple of days at the party office there. The PLA we interviewed seemed to be not happy with the discharge process. They said the party urged them to leave the cantonment in order to support the conclusion of the peace process. They appeared to be frustrated by their discharge and could not understand why they were discharged. They were told that they were too young but felt this was an excuse and guessed that a certain quota of PLA had to be discharged from each division (they belonged to division 1). All three were told by the party that, if they want to continue their affiliation with the party, they can participate in different party activities outside the camp.

They stated that there is no goal in their future other than to establish a new people's constitution, as they believe "there is no certainty and fulfillment of personal life until there a positive political system is established".

All three stated that they do not want to go back to school. They explained; "we don't want to go back to school,

we studied up to grade 8/10 and are able to lead our own lives.” They stated that they fought to end monarchy and feudalism. All three PLA we interviewed joined the party in 2003.

All three ex-PLA are planning to continue their involvement with the UCPN-M. In order to continue their affiliation with the party, the PLA contacted the party once they reached [their home district] and expressed their interest to work for the UCPN-M. They want to be active in one of the party organizations to establish a new people’s constitution and to change the existing political system. “This is what we fought for over several years.” The party responded positively to their wish to continue working for the UCPN-M. All interviewed PLA stated that they are ready to start protesting against the UCPN-M if the party fails to address its promises of establishing a new people’s constitution.

The interviewed said that to some extent the peace process in Nepal is moving into the right direction, and changes they have fought for are happening. For instance, CA elections have taken place, the monarchy has been abolished and Nepal has become a republic. They expressed, however, that there are many other issues that have not yet been dealt with (e.g. a new constitution).

All discharged PLA are on holiday in their respective VDCs. The interviewed discharged PLA mentioned that they are in regular contact with other former PLA, including the ones that left the cantonments voluntarily. According to them most friends are in contact with the party and want to remain involved with the UCPN-M. They do not know of anyone who has joined another group or party, such as the CPN-M Matrika.

“We feel humiliated by the package provided by the government, especially the vocational trainings. We have already acquired skills in carpentry and electro mechanics. The knowledge we acquired is superior of what the government is offering us now. We suspect the package is just a tactic to dominate and ultimately to disarm us. We urge international agencies like The Carter Center to suggest to the government to acknowledge our contributions in the war and to transform Nepal into a republic. It was that reason why we fought in the people’s war that abolished the monarchy. All discharged PLA want their contribution to the transformation of Nepali society be acknowledged by the government, rather than any of their packages or programs.”

The three PLA interviewed said they are not aware of the reasons for their discharge as they have joined the party already in 2003. They also strongly criticized the package provided by the government, saying “we do not want the government package, it is for children”.

Interview #9

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Returned Magh 21 (early February)

Date of interview: 16 March 2010

It is his home village. His family is there. He acknowledged that another discharged PLA is in the village but he did not acknowledge that his wife is also a discharged PLA (we didn't ask but heard it from another former PLA).

Everything is fine. No challenges.

Right now he is in agriculture. He said he didn't receive any information about help but did admit that he received a UN contact number but hasn't called yet. He would like to receive training if he had the chance but ultimately would like to join the army. His uncle (who was present at the interview) is in the army.

He said he joined the Maoists after he had already left school. He wanted to join the NA and “to serve the people”.

“[I will not retain my affiliation with the Maoists.] By leaving the cantonment I left the party.” The only group he mentioned joining is the NA. He says he has the same feeling about the party as he had from the start. The peace process is good for everyone.

The process of discharging him because he is underage really hurts.

Interview #10

Gender: Female

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Left Magh 21 (1 months)

Date of interview: 21 March 2010

NOTE: She was interviewed with her family present.

“Yes [I am in my home village].” She said she was not aware of other discharged PLA in the village.

“I have had no difficulties returning. It was like it was in the past. I am currently studying computers in the bazaar – paying for the course on my own. I will start grade 8 at the beginning of the next term (April-May).”

She wants to remain in the Maoist party and study up to high school but she is not very interested in the UN assistance available to her. She knows about the training, education and health options and at one point mentioned interest in training as a health worker but she changed her mind. She called the toll-free number but decided to stay home and not go to [the nearest UN-administered training site].

She joined the Maoists in 2062 (2005-06) to “give security to the country.” She didn't give a political reason even when prompted.

Since returning she attended a general Maoist assembly on the disappeared and martyrs in [her home district]. She was not specifically invited but there was a general invitation and she went. She has met with a few Maoist leaders since returning but mainly ones from the same village who asked normal questions. They didn't invite her to join them. She doesn't know of any restrictions [on her retaining her affiliation with the Maoist party].

She said the peace process is fine but when prompted she complained that the leaders should come to them and ask them for their opinion. Yet when we asked her what she would say to leaders when asked she didn't voice an opinion.

Interview #11

Gender: Female

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Left Magh 20 (1 months)

Date of interview: 21 March 2010

NOTE: She was a very timid girl with a 8-month old baby. She was interviewed with her family, including her mother, who is a Maoist leader, and her husband, who was verified as a PLA member and was on leave from the [neighboring district] cantonment. She was very reluctant and uncomfortable saying anything and her husband dominated the interview, even by his presence:

This is her home village.

[Coming back home has been] fine. (Her husband added that some people have been rumoured to be speaking behind her back, saying that she was sent to the PLA so why has she returned – implying that she had failed). She said she is not happy with the situation because her aim was to be in the army.

She said her future is dark and doesn't know what she will do. (Her husband said she will raise her child with her family [in her home district], be a housewife and work in agriculture.) She gave her husband the UN toll-free number and he called but was only given information on education options. She sounded a bit dazed and ambivalent about her options. However, she said that some of her friends went to [the nearest UN-administered training site] for training.

She was working in the Maoist student union long before she joined the PLA in 2062 (2005-06). When she entered the PLA she went underground. [However, now] she won't stay with the party because she was disqualified.

[Her reintegration process] is not going well but she wouldn't say why.

Interview #12

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Left Magh 21 (1 month)

Date of interview: 21 March 2010

NOTE: He was interviewed with his family. He and his wife had both been disqualified and she was in [a nearby city] doing tailoring training. He said she was happy with the counseling that she received from the UN. She came back and discussed her options with the family and they all decided that tailoring was best.

“I have been received fine. No problems. I am a bit sad that I didn't have the chance to enter the army.” (His father added that there is a lot of work to do at home.)

“The army was harassing people in the area and I wanted to be a combatant so I joined the PLA in 2062 (2005-06).”

“I will keep an affiliation with the Maoists, wherever there is a need. I haven't attended any events since I returned. No one has come from the party although I met some in the village. They didn't invite me to join them. There are no restrictions [on my involvement].”

“Some friends are home and some are doing training. I am not happy with the training options offered. I went to [a UN-administered location] to ask about the driving course but learned that they would not guarantee me a government driving job. I decided not to take any training. If they had had large equipment operation training (bulldozers, etc) I would have taken that.”

Interview # 13

Gender: Female

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 2 months

Date of interview: 3 April 2010

NOTE: The interview was conducted together with her elder sister who had been in the PLA but was not disqualified. Both sisters had been pressured to join the PLA after their father's arrest. Unlike the younger sister, the elder sister had left the camp three years ago to continue her interrupted schooling in the village. The elder sister is currently studying in +2 first year.

The girls' father joined later in the interview. He had been forced to join the Maoists early during the armed conflict and has since left the party. After he joined the party in 2000/2001, he was arrested by the army and held in detention for more than two years. He continues to suffer from the physical and mental consequences of torture

during his interrogation (occasional blackouts and mental instability). His wife was also ill-treated at the time of her husband's arrest and as a consequence has lost her hearing.

She wants to continue with her education. Although she feels she has lost several years, she joined school in her village again where she just sat for the 8th grade exams. She is aware of the packages and expressed a vague interest in the health package, but has not contacted the UN or any other organization about this. The exact reason for not contacting the UN yet remains unclear, possibly a combination of Maoist pressure, the families' disillusionment with the entire process, and because she just sat for the 8th grade exams that are a prerequisite for the health training.

Both sisters were pressured to join the PLA. At the time, their father had been detained and local Maoists forced the elder of the six siblings at home to join their struggle. In November 2005, a few days before their 7th and 9th grade exams respectively, they were abducted from home and only allowed to visit their family after six months. Both stated that even if they had the opportunity to run away they feared revenge would be taken. During the time in the PLA, the sisters were given weapons training but were not forced to participate in any attack. Two weeks after they joined, the elder sister requested to be sent to the accounts department and kept her younger sister with her.

It is important to note that their case appears to be isolated: as far as they know, other youth in the village who joined the PLA did so voluntarily.

There appears to be mounting pressure for the younger sister to come to the party office at the District Headquarters (DHQ) and help with party activities. However, her family is determined to keep her out of contact and make her continue her schooling in the village. According to her elder sister, the family had received a phone call the previous day demanding that they send the discharged sister to the Maoist office in the DHQ. Determined not to send her, the elder sister made an excuse. The family was sure that the Maoists eventually will inquire about the matter and call them out on their excuse. However, they are determined to keep her at home for schooling, despite mounting pressure. The father also noted that the condition where Maoist cadres sleep in the Maoist office in the DHQ is cramped and food is unhygienic.

The elder sister also reported that many qualified PLA of the district left the camp early. However, now after the discharge process of the disqualified, many of them have returned. However, according to the elder sister, there has been nepotism within the party ranks and only those who have family members within the ranks have been called back to the camp (given the expectation that the army integration process will soon commence). The elder sister has sent an application to the party office, stating that she had also invested an important part of her life to the party, and sacrificed a lot for the struggle, and she should also be considered when a settlement is reached. She has not received any reply, but stated that she won't be going back to the cantonment, as she thinks the party leadership is only giving false assurances that they will educate and take care of them.

The family certainly blamed the Maoists for their fate and said that they were responsible for the sisters falling behind several years in their education. According to the younger sister, at the time of verification, there had been 15 PLA nationwide that like her had not reached 15 years of age. For those, so she says, the UN had proposed to provide accommodation and education for three years, a proposal the UCPN (M) leadership apparently rejected.

Being in the accounts section of the PLA, the elder sister got to know immediately after the verification process and about who had and had not been disqualified. Both sisters seemed to be well-informed about the basis for disqualification. According to them, combatants were only informed 5-6 months after the UNMIN had sent the list to the commanders about their status. Nevertheless, PLA commanders insisted that disqualified should stay in the camp assuring them, rather unrealistically, that the Maoists would later renegotiate with the UN and get them 'qualified'. Most of them appear to be in regular contact with the party and do go to the party office in the DHQ

when they are called.

The younger sister reported that after UNMIN had finished the discharge process, the outgoing ex-combatants had a last closed session with their PLA commander in which they were threatened with party action if any of them should talk to any outside organization or outside observer. It appears that they had also been discouraged to take up any of the UNMIN packages. The threat had not been repeated since she has arrived in the district, but given the longstanding row between the family and the UCPN (Maoist) district leadership, both sisters expressed concern that if anything they told us became public it might have repercussions for their family. They were also certain that Maoists will eventually inquire with them about what and why they talked with us.

Interview #14

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Unclear (less than two months)

Date of interview: 6 April 2010

“I returned to my home village.” (He seemed confused by the suggestion that he might do otherwise). “The UN forced us to return home but our minds are still in the cantonments.” There are no other discharged in the VDC.

“My family and neighbors have treated me well. I’m not happy in my situation, though; I left the cantonment against my will. I feel better at the cantonment than at home.”

“I plan to continue my education and look for work. I have received support from BASE. One woman in my village worked for BASE and she told me that they could help me. I also had the option to take a driving, veterinary, or CMA course. But doing one’s SLC is a big achievement and will open more opportunities for better jobs.”

“The PLA beat us, including my family. I was forced to join. I joined in 2063 (2006).”

“Yes [I will retain my affiliation with the Maoist party]. I want to join the party’s office and continue the revolution. There are no restrictions on my joining.”

“The Maoists found where I was after the discharge and encouraged me to continue with the party.” (The party seemed to be searching for discharged PLA at the SLC exam but did not know about him specifically). “They told me there would be a program in the DHQ to form a YCL group. It was held 10-15 days ago, and I attended. They told us we were forced to leave the cantonments but they knew our minds were still there. I don’t know how many other discharged PLA were there.” (The program was not specifically for discharged PLA).

“Before I left the cantonment, I was given a party membership card. I will definitely attend today’s party program [Jana Andolan celebration]. Before, my family used to live under a plastic tarp. Now we have a well-built house and good transportation.” (The implication is that the Maoists have brought development).

“I think the peace process will succeed. Our party’s goals will be achieved. [My friends among the discharges] are home. Some have opened shops, work in party-run cooperatives, etc.”

“Yes [I feel embarrassment at the label “disqualified”], but only UNMIN uses that label. No one else has given me embarrassment by labeling me as disqualified.”

Interview # 15

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 1 month

Date of interview: 7 April 2010

“Yes. I came back straight to home on 25th of Falgun 2066 (9 March 2010). But I stayed only one night there. The next morning I left for [a neighboring district headquarters] to take the tuition classes for the SLC exams. Except one I don’t have any idea how many returned in this village.”

“I don’t think I was received well by my neighbors at my return. Even my parents didn’t give me warm welcome. They all said to me, ‘why you are back home now after so many years which you had left without saying anything to anybody.’ They also teased me with asking what I got in return. This all really frustrated me. That was the real challenge to tackle with. That’s why I left the home very next morning and went to [the neighboring district headquarters].”

“Now they don’t say like anything like that. However, I don’t think their attitude has changed much. I have spent all the money that was given by UNMIN and the Party. Now I don’t have any money left. I’m quite concerned about how I will continue my further study since my does not support me. Therefore, I am not all happy. But I’m quite happy that I have got to take my SLC exams. Anyhow I want to continue the study. I want to study biology and want to become a medical doctor.”

“I joined the Maoist party as PLA in Baishakh 2062 (April/May 2005). I joined PLA out of desire. As I grew up I would very often dream of joining the PLA. One more reason of joining the PLA was the killing of my own uncle by the (then Royal) Army who was a teacher in [a local school]. He was brutally killed by the Army around 2059 (2002-03). This incident had a deep impact on me and later on it instigated me to join the PLA. I have been a PLA member for almost five years.”

“I’m still associated with the Maoist party. I do take part in rallies and mass meetings. I also take part in YCL programs. I don’t think if there are any kinds of restriction to retain the affiliation with the party. I’ll continue my affiliation with the party. My relations with the local leaders of the party are good. The party hasn’t yet asked to come to rejoin the party.”

“My opinion of the party has not much changed. It is almost same. But I have a complaint against the party that it failed to take strong enough stance in our favor in the qualification process.”

“[I blame the current government for my situation.] The peace process is not going right direction. It’s really disappointing we have the Prime Minister who was defeated from two constituencies. How can a man who was clearly discarded by the constituents from two constituencies be responsible to the people? The government is not paying serious attention to constitution writing. I don’t expect any good from this government.”

“The state must take good care of us. I would be thankful to you if you could take my message to them.”

Interview # 16

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: Falgun 25 (around 5 weeks)

Date of interview: 8 April 2010

“Yes [this is my home village]. My family and neighbors have all treated me well. They do not have any negative perceptions.”

“My only ambition is to serve my nation according to my capability and by continuing my work with the party. I sat for the SLC exam and plan to continue my studies.”

“I joined [the Maoists] six years ago, in 2060 (2003-04). The Army came to my home, beat my family, and killed my maternal uncle. They called us Maoists. I became curious about the Maoists and decided to join the PLA.”

“I contacted the party after I returned from cantonment and told them I would contribute. They have given me some responsibility in my village. The party did not contact discharged PLA; we contacted them. We are going to form a unit that is like the YCL but higher. Those former PLA who are truly dedicated have the skills to command the YCL. We know about command structures.”

“The party tried its best to keep us in the PLA. The party explained why we were disqualified. It is the UN who found us disqualified. The party and government should take care of us.”

“Before we left the cantonment, we had a meeting with the party. The party assured us that the objectives for which we fought would be achieved. We told the party to continue the revolution and to write the constitution. I think our objectives will be achieved.”

Some [of my friends from the PLA] will have difficulties at home because of their injuries from the war. But 75 percent of them have full dedication to the party.”

“[Disqualified] is not a good label. I shared many meals, battles, and guns with my friends to win the war. But some of us have been called qualified and some disqualified. I feel sad and so do my friends who are still in the camps. My dedication is with the party, whether I am in or out of the cantonment.”

“The government gave a small package but it is not enough for me. Many of my comrades lost their lives. The package will be meaningless unless we achieve the goals of the revolution.”

“No [I have nothing else to add]. But I am glad that you contacted us; I feel good about this discussion.”

Interview #17

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 2.5 months

Date of interview: 13 April 2010

NOTE: Interviews #17, 18, and 19 were conducted jointly at a UCPN(M) office. The three interviewees were called by the local Maoist DIC to speak with observers. Interviewee #17 appeared well-informed and was the most outspoken of the three interviewed.

It was not his home village. He had returned to his home in [another district] for one month after being discharged and was now visiting his peers (other ex-PLA) in [the district where the interview was held], “reuniting, planning for the future.” He was uncertain of his plans, but would be returning soon to his family that currently lives in [another district].

He expressed unhappiness with his reception and current situation – “life is not normal at all.” People in his village were disrespectful to him because he had been “disqualified.” He felt there was no place or work for him at home. He was unhappy that “five to six years of the most productive time in his life” had been wasted, asking, “What did I get out of this?”

He was also uncertain why he had been disqualified. According to him, based on his age and participation with the PLA, he should not have been disqualified. When we asked if he had raised the matter with the party or UNMIN he said, “We have not had a chance to speak with UNMIN and have no reason to question the party.” We are not certain why he was disqualified.

He is not certain about his goals for the future. He will continue working for the party (which is not paying him), but must take care of his family first. Frustration with the lack of guidance and financial assistance the government and UNMIN provided after leaving the cantonments was discussed foremost. As he said, “nobody has looked after us.” He didn’t blame the party, but like the others he was interviewed with, wished it had the ability to do more for them.

He has not and will not seek assistance using the rehabilitation package provided by the government. He believed it would be a poor use of his time to only take six months of training for a profession that is highly competitive. He asked, “How can I compete with others who have been doing this work their whole life?” and “Where do I get the money to start a business?” While he had no particular idea about what he would do, he felt he could find something better than what the government had offered. When asked what he wanted from the government, his response was “a large chunk of money or land.”

“I had seen all of the other parties, and the Maoists seemed pro-people.” He did not give further explanation about why he joined the PLA.

He will retain his affiliation with the Maoists. He will continue to work for the party when called, but said he must balance his time working for the party while providing for his family.

He was fully in support of the Maoists and planned to continue working with the party as much as possible. He reiterated that it would be helpful if the party could pay him, but did not appear to hold this against the party. He placed blame for the current situation on the leaders of NC and UML at the center who he saw as “fearful of the Maoists,” and “out to destroy them.”

He said most of his friends who were discharged from the PLA went home to see their families. Most are working for the party, but are not being paid. His trip to [the district where the interview was held] was to reunite with the other discharged PLA and plan for their future. He could not clearly define what “planning for the future” meant, but said that him and his peers wanted to find a way to secure better opportunities and be beneficial to society. The party was said to not be organizing this group of discharged PLA, but our interviewee hoped that the new discharged PLA organization could become a wing of the party.

Interview #18

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 2.5 months

Date of interview: 13 April 2010

NOTE: Interviews #17, 18, and 19 were conducted jointly at a UCPN(M) office. The three interviewees were called by the local Maoist DIC to speak with observers. Interviewee #18 appeared well informed, but was quieter than interviewee #17, agreeing with most of what he said/adding where he thought would be beneficial.

It was not his home village. He had returned to his home in [a neighboring district] for one month after being discharged and like Interviewee #17 was visiting his peers (other ex-PLA) in [the district where the interview was held].

He expressed more concern than Interviewee #17, saying it was quite difficult for him to move about his

community without others harassing him for having been “disqualified.” Although he knows why he was released, he said those in his community do not, making interaction within the community difficult. According to him, this is a problem for many of those who were disqualified.

Like Interviewee #17, he was not certain why he had been disqualified. According to him, based on his age and participation, there was no reason for him to have been disqualified. Like Interviewee #17, he had not raised the issue with UNMIN or the party.

Like Interviewee #17, he is living with his family and currently has no particular idea about what he will do financially.

He will not seek assistance using the rehabilitation package provided by the government. He was as equally frustrated as Interviewee #17, believing investing 6 months into a package would only be a waste of his time.

He joined the Maoists “because it was the only party that was doing anything for the poor.” We did not discuss the sequence of events that led him to join the PLA. He continues to strongly support the Maoists and will work for them when he is called.

Like Interviewee #17, he also blamed NC and UML for trying to sabotage the Maoists.

Similar to Interviewee #17, most of his friends who were discharged from the PLA went home to see their families and are living with them. Most are working for the party when called, but are not being paid. His trip to [the district where the interview was held] was to again reunite with the other discharged PLA and plan for their future.

Interview #19

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 2.5 months

Date of interview: 13 April 2010

NOTE: Interviews #17, 18, and 19 were conducted jointly at a UCPN(M) office. The three interviewees were called by the local Maoist DIC to speak with observers. Interviewee #19 appeared to be less informed than Interviewees #17 and 18, very loyal to the party and potentially called upon frequently to do party work by leaders because they know he is committed. Interviewees #17 and 18 interrupted him at certain intervals to clarify remarks he had made.

He was in his home district, but his house is in [a nearby] VDC. He has been living at home with his family since he was discharged from the cantonment.

Like Interviewees #17 and 18, he was concerned about not being accepted in his community and being “teased for being a discharged.” He was not happy with the situation, given he does not feel comfortable at home and cannot find suitable employment.

He did not understand why he was discharged. Unlike Interviewees #17 and 18, he believed disqualification was based on height, weight and age. He exclaimed, “I’m six feet tall!” proceeding to ask us why he was disqualified. Interviewees #17 and 18 explained to us that based on his age (above 30) and participation with the PLA he should not have been disqualified.

He also expressed frustration with demands placed on him by the party, saying “I am frequently called upon (by the party) and do not know where the bus fare and food will come from,” and “I was called to speak with you

today and had a long way to come.” He has apparently taken out loans to cover his expenses to do party work and is worried about paying them back.

He wants to receive further training in karate. “I am a well recognized sportsman,” and “would like to continue with my training in Japan or Thailand.”

According to him, UNMIN had promised during the discharge process to send him to Japan or Thailand to train with a karate coach. He was given the Kathmandu number provided to all the discharged and told to call it. He said he had tried, but was very frustrated because he had never been able to contact a representative. He also said that he had visited an OHCHR office, and all they had offered him was an education, carpentry and tailoring course. He was against all of these, and said if he was to receive an education he would want to be able to study through the Masters level. Apparently OHCHR said they would call him back about karate training, but never did. Overall, he was unhappy with the packages offered and the assistance he had received.

When asked [why he joined the Maoists], he said “NC and UML could not become a peoples’ party.” He said he is very committed to the Maoists and will remain working for the party despite the hardships.

When asked [about the peace process in Nepal], he said “I strongly believe a new government should be formed under the Maoists.”

He had little to say about other discharged PLA. He appeared less informed about the whereabouts of his peers.

Interview #20

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 3 months

Date of interview: 24 April 2010

NOTE: The interview was held in a private room inside his house in his home VDC. He explained that he stayed in the DHQ in his relative’s house for about a month after being discharged. He returned to his village after he had taken class 8 exams.

He did not give us any example of being received poorly in the village. However, he seemed unhappy with his own situation and feels humiliated in front of his old friends who all passed him in their studies while he was in the PLA. Some of his friends have also taunted him about joining the Maoists instead of carrying on with his studies/his current poor condition after leaving the PLA. He feels like he has ruined his chances for a career by joining the Maoists, and has nothing to show for after all these years.

He plans to continue his studies. He told that has passed grade 8 examinations this year and plans to take the education option of the UNMIN package. However, even if no organization is going to support him, he will continue with his studies arranging his own funds through his family. He also said that if he were offered employment by some NGO, as part of the resettlement program, he would also not be disinclined.

He had initially joined the Maoist culture wing with friends. He was a dancer. After one year he was selected for the PLA. He does not remember the exact date when he joined the PLA, but he thinks he had been in the organization for four years before he was disqualified.

He was adamant that he would not join the ‘Party’ again. He repeatedly told us that he does not want to ruin his life further by doing so. About two months ago he received a phone call from the UCPN(Maoist) in the district who asked him to report to the district party office. He however refused, asking them if they wanted to ruin his life even further. He told them that he was now focused on continuing his education and that he would only come

if they could guarantee his future. They have not gotten back to him.

He does not care about the 'Party' and feels that he spoiled his life by joining it. It's very unlikely that he will be joining any other party or group.

According to him, the current government and UN should take responsibility for the disqualified, as it was these entities that disqualified them. He also questioned the grounds of 'disqualification' and claimed others who were younger and less capable than him had 'passed'. Even though he refrained from openly blaming the Maoists for being discharged, the dissatisfaction expressed in his other comments made it more than apparent.

He has not been in contact with other discharged PLA [since himself being discharged].

[When asked if he had anything else to share] he again expressed his dissatisfaction with the whole discharge process and asked why the disqualified had been disqualified and what the standards were. He would have also preferred to receive some kind of financial compensation (1 lakh) instead of the rehabilitation packages offered.

INTERVIEWS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS OF FORMALLY DISCHARGED PLA (#21-22)

Interview #21

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: unclear

Date of interview: 16 March 2010

NOTE: This interview was conducted with the sister-in-laws of a discharged PLA

This is his home village.

He was received fine. His family is sad that he wasn't able to go in the army. Also his wife is still in the cantonment as she was verified. They are unhappy about that. The discharge money went to the head of household – his father.

The family had heard about the discharge packages on the radio. He apparently is considering driver ed. When we interviewed he was writing the grade 8 exam. He began grade 8 in the cantonment.

The family members we spoke with were proud Maoist supporters, speaking of 'our party.' They expect that he will maintain links with the party. The party contacted him once just to find out why he was disqualified. They have not been in touch since.

Interview #22

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 1 month

Date of interview: 21 March 2010

Note: We spoke briefly with the father of a young man who was in [another city] doing driver's training.

According to his father he initially came home and was 'crying' because he had wanted to go into the army. His father said he must look to the future. He had no skills so he had to gain some. He went to [another city] to do driver's training. He wasn't happy because he had no income. He initially asked his family for some money to go but now that he's there he is getting an allowance. He's still not happy though.

INTERVIEWS WITH PLA WHO WERE NOT FORMALLY DISCHARGED (#23-25)

Interview #23

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: 8/9 months

Date of interview: April 2010

Yes, this is my home village. I'm living with my family. I had no other place to go that's why it was natural to be back in home. Two PLA came to the village before me. They left the cantonment after the first verification.

My family members received me with whole heart. They were very happy to see me back home. My parents and my elder sister (who is studying in class 12) encouraged me to resume my study. The community also received me well but some of my acquaintances and party members (Maoists) reprimanded me for leaving the cantonment abruptly. They had with the opinion that had I waited till the end of the exit process the UNMIN would have certainly done something for me. Not any big challenges that I had to face. But I felt a bit uncomfortable in the beginning couple of weeks. Yes, I'm happy that I have been well supported by my family and also continuing my study.

I want to continue my study. I have just taken SLC exams. If I pass the exams I'll enroll in college and also try to get a job which will help support myself and the family as well. My family is poor.

I joined the Maoists to fight for the country. The senior Maoist leaders of our village would encourage the youth of the village to join the Maoists. They would often come to our house and would say the country needed your contribution. So just come and join the party. Some of my friends joined the PLA. Then I also thought why I should not join and I also joined the party. The same reason to join the PLA. I joined PLA in early months of 2063.

I'm still associated with the party. I do take part in village level party activities.

[My opinion of the party has not changed much]. But I think the Maoists should have done much better than now. The party has not put as much efforts as it could have done in constitution writing, peace establishment and resolving unemployment problems.

I'm happy that peace process is still on. But I don't think it is going smoothly. The current government is to be blamed for this.

Interview #24

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: before the CA elections (April 2008) / the other interviewee never went to the cantonment

Date of interview: 4 April 2010

NOTE: A member of CPN-M Matrika was present throughout the interview.

Both interviewed ex-PLA are active members of CPN-M Matrika.

The interviewed ex-PLA, who voluntarily left the cantonment, left just before the CA elections in April 2008. He mentioned that PLA in the cantonments were frustrated and that relationships with their commanders were poor. He left the cantonment because he was frustrated with the course the UCPN-M was taking. Moreover, he noted that, "I could not recognize Prachanda's commitment for change anymore. He did not keep his promises." Given

his disillusionment with the UCPN-M he decided to join CPN-M Matrika. Since leaving the cantonment he has not returned back.

Both ex-PLA told us that they did not face any problems when returning home. They have good relationships with people in their respective communities. The formerly cantoned PLA said he had the chance to visit his home while in the cantonment. They further mentioned that due to their party's good work for the people and community they were normally well received.

The interviewees said that their main aim for the future is to work for the people as active members of CPN-M Matrika. Both ex-PLA expressed that they do not need any integration package. Furthermore, they said the offered packages are not sufficient and that most PLA they know are not happy with them. "Instead of integration packages, we want a new people's constitution."

Both interviewed ex-combatants joined the PLA in 1996/97. They were active combatants until the end of the People's War.

As both interviewed joined CPN-M Matrika they have to this date no affiliation with the UCPN-M. However, both former combatants stated that along with other former PLA they were offered positions within the YCL or other party sister organizations. Both interviewed, along with many others, were not satisfied with the UCPN-M offers and declined it.

The ex-combatants also said that PLA are free to decide about what to do in the future. They can join any other party or organization, go abroad to work or retain their affiliation with the UCPN-M.

The former PLA we met told us that they joined CPN-M Matrika because they were disillusioned with the direction the UCPN-M was taking. They claimed that in difference to CPN-M Matrika, the UCPN-M had abandoned revolutionary politics and was not fulfilling the expectations raised during the People's War. CPN-M Matrika gave them an opportunity to continue to work for the changes in society that they fought war during the People's War.

The interviewed PLA who had lived in the cantonment said he became deeply disillusioned with the UCPN-M while staying in the in camp. As mentioned previously, his opinion of the Maoists changed because they had left their revolutionary path, abandoning the issues (new people's constitution, revolutionary people's government) he had fought for.

During our conversation the former PLA expressed their dissatisfaction with the peace process. They said they do not expect the new constitution to be in favor of the people. Hence they said they have to continue their struggle. What exactly the struggle will look like still has to be decided upon by their party.

While both ex-PLA blamed government and UN, they appeared to be particularly angry with the UCPN-M. To some extent their anger with the UCPN-M must be understood as CPN-M Matrika propaganda. Nevertheless it was interesting that they were particularly blaming UCPN-M for the current situation.

According to the interviewees some of their friends are still in the cantonments, a few joined UCPN-M party organizations and some have joined CPN-M Matrika. The majority was said to have joined CPN-M Matrika.

Moreover, we were told that none of the recently discharged PLA from [the district] joined an armed group. However, it was mentioned in the conversation that some years ago a few PLA cadres had joined armed groups. They were reported to be not very committed to the party's ideology. While some of these PLA were killed in encounters with security forces others left to work abroad.

When asked why he never went to the cantonment, the interviewed PLA replied that it was the Maoists' strategy to bring new 'untrained' recruits into the camps. Older well experienced PLA were intentionally kept outside the cantonments to take senior roles in the YCL. This would ensure that the YCL could be quickly mobilized if necessary, and that experienced cadres are available to train new YCL recruits. He hence was working with the YCL for some time before joining CPN-M Matrika.

The interviewed ex-PLA told us that many PLA are frustrated with the discharge process. Given that they were qualified to fight a war, they cannot understand how they are not qualified to join the security forces. The CPN-M Matrika representative told us another factor that adds to the frustration of the discharged PLA is that they were not given an explanation as to why they were discharged. He further explained that in his understanding the reason for this is that PLA commanders are afraid to lose face. In order to not lose the respect of the PLA cadres and to fuel their anger, the leadership decided not to disclose the reasons for the discharge. He added that in his eyes all PLA are qualified as they have been carefully chosen by the then CPN-M to fight the People's War.

In addition, the CPN-M Matrika representative said he cannot understand why his party has not been officially involved in the discharge / reintegration process. He argued that due to the fact that many former PLA had joined his party, the government, UNMIN and the UCPN-M should have consulted them about the process.

Interview #25

Gender: Male

Time lapsed since s/he left the cantonment: more than 3 years

Date of interview: 16 March 2010

He escaped with a friend three years ago. He said he left because he felt the senior combatants were exploiting the junior ones. Commanders were not doing their share of the watch duty and the junior ones ended up doing more than their share. Sometimes they treated him roughly. His friend left for the same reason. He did not return to the cantonment but, after the Maoists contacted them, asking them to return, his friend did return and was punished. His friend left the cantonment again. He joined the Nepal Army two years ago.

In all, four people left from the village (ward) before the verification. The other two are in India – no trouble in the village; they just went for economic reasons.

This is his home village. He came to be with family. His mother was asking him to come home. At first a few people said 'Why did you join?' but after that it was ok. People received him well. Also in school everything is fine, he says. He is in a local football club. He is in class 10 now and has been in school since he returned. He plans to work or maybe study after he graduates. He was assisted by CWIN with fees, etc. CWIN gave his friend driver's training.

He and his friend joined the Maoists together in 2061 (2004-05) when he was in class 7. The Maoists convinced them, saying they would get good food and clothes. He was with them for about two years. He has no affiliation [with the Maoist party currently]. He was never invited to join the party and doesn't seem to have any interest. He's just moving on with his life.