



CARTER CENTER: CLASHES BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTY YOUTH WINGS HAVE DECREASED BUT YCL AND UML YOUTH FORCE CONTINUE TO SEEK FINANCIAL GAIN

February 28, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

In Atlanta: Deborah Hakes, +1 404-420-5124

In Kathmandu: Sarah Levit-Shore, +977 1 444-5055/1446

Kathmandu... In a report released today, Carter Center observers found that overall clashes between political party youth wings appear to have decreased since the first half of 2010. However, many activities of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) and, to a lesser extent, the CPN-UML Youth Force¹ remain targeted toward financial gain, and youth wing activity continues to have a negative impact on security in many districts.

“Political party youth wings have the potential to play a positive role in Nepal,” said Dr. David Pottie, Associate Director of the Carter Center’s Democracy Program. “However, we have found the YCL and the CPN-UML Youth Force engaged in interference with tender processes, taxation, and other activities that undermine political space, development, and public security.”

The Carter Center’s report also covers Maoist compliance with the June 2008 agreement to terminate the YCL’s “paramilitary functioning.” The Center found that there is no shared definition of the term “paramilitary,” thus leading to confusion and difficulty in evaluating compliance.

The large majority of YCL sites visited by Carter Center observers did not appear to be organized in a military-style hierarchy. However, observers did find one site in Kaski that was intended to serve as a “rapid response force” and where cadres appeared to be unable to leave without permission from their superiors. Observers found other cases where YCL cadres were living communally in private and sometimes public buildings, but found no evidence in these cases of a military-style hierarchy. Regardless of the internal organization of communal living sites, many government officials, non-Maoist party representatives, and citizens expressed concern that YCL communal living could contribute to local insecurity.

Overall, there have been very few public activities conducted by political party youth wings since June 2010. The UCPN(M) and UML appear to have the most active youth wings, with the Nepali Congress, Madhesi parties, and other smaller party youth wings conducting only limited activities at the local level. Members report

¹ The CPN-UML Youth Force was established in 2008 to counter the YCL, but in December 2009 was transferred under the direct control of the party in an effort to address concerns about allegations of negative Youth Force activities. However, this decision was unevenly implemented and in many districts the Carter Center continued to hear reports of concerning UML Youth Force activities.

undertaking constructive activities such as community service and development works but these appear mostly low-profile and are often difficult to verify. Observers also heard many reports of negative youth wing activities, primarily involving the YCL and, to a lesser extent, the CPN-UML Youth Force. The Federal Limbuwan State Council Limbuwan Volunteers were also implicated in negative activities in the Eastern hills.

The report is based on recent findings of Carter Center observers throughout the country, who have observed the post-election peace and constitutional drafting process since June 2009. The Center collected information on youth wings in 30 districts through interviews with political party youth wing members, district administration officials, political parties, civil society, and citizens. The Center's report looks into who joins political party youth wings, what they receive, and what their aspirations are after joining. It also addresses what kinds of activities political party youth wings engage in and to what degree these activities are in compliance with the peace process agreements signed by their mother parties. An annex at the end of the report provides information on individual youth wing organizations such as self-reported membership estimates and organizational structures.

Previous Carter Center reports on Nepal's peace and constitutional drafting process may be found at www.cartercenter.org.

####

“Waging Peace, Fighting Disease, Building Hope.” A not-for-profit non-governmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in more than 70 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; improving mental health care; and teaching farmers in developing nations to increase crop production. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University to advance peace and health worldwide. Please visit www.cartercenter.org to learn more about The Carter Center.

POLITICAL PARTY YOUTH WINGS IN NEPAL

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Methodology	2
III.	Summary of Findings	3
IV.	Voices of Youth Wing Members	5
V.	Youth Wing Activities	8
	A. Overall Levels of Public Activity	8
	B. Activities Self-Reported by Youth Wings	8
	C. Other Activities and Sources of Tension Between Youth Wings	10
	D. Youth Wings as “Muscle Power”	14
	E. Public Perceptions of Youth Wings	15
VI.	YCL “Paramilitary Functioning”	16
VII.	Conclusions and Recommendations	21
	ANNEX 1: Glossary of Key Terms	24
	ANNEX 2: Overview of Political Party and Identity Group Youth Wings by Organization	25

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth in Nepal have historically played a critical role in the country's democratic development. However, in recent years political party youth wings have become increasingly associated with aggressive activity, notably since the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN(M)) Young Communist League (YCL) was re-activated in 2006. In the run up to the 2008 Constituent Assembly election, the YCL was implicated in extortion, intimidation and violent activities. Since the election, Nepal has seen the formation of a "Youth Force"² by the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) as a counter-YCL group. Additionally, there have been repeated allegations of YCL, CPN-UML Youth Force, and other party or identity group youth wing involvement in actions which negatively affect the political, economic, and security environment in districts throughout the country. Nepali politics at the local level has never been entirely peaceful and there is certainly historical precedent of youth being mobilized as "muscle,"³ but the rising trend since 2006 has raised the attention of district administration officials, political party members, civil society, community members, international observers, and both domestic and international media.

The importance of regulating political party behavior as well as the behavior of party youth wings is recognized in a number of peace process agreements. One of the most prominent clauses related to youth wings is Article 3 of a June 2008 agreement in which the Maoists agreed that the "paramilitary functioning and activities of [the YCL] will be completely terminated."⁴ UCPN(M) compliance with this agreement is considered in depth in Section VI of this report. Subsequent agreements and statements by Maoist party leaders have reiterated this commitment with revised timelines. Parties have also made repeated commitments to curb violence between youth wings.⁵ Finally, there are many broader commitments that apply to all political parties regarding general norms of political behavior and respect for the rule of law included in the May 2006 Code of Conduct, the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and agreements signed in December 2007, April 2008, June 2008, and April 2009.

From the outset of its current observation mission in June 2009, the Carter Center has been gathering information about political party youth wings at the local level. This report is intended to provide a general overview of youth wings today, and attempts to address the following main questions:

- Who joins political party youth wings, what do they receive, and what are their aspirations?
- In what kinds of activities do political party youth wings engage?
- To what degree are youth wings in compliance with the peace process agreements signed by their mother parties?

An annex at the end of the report provides information on individual youth wing organizations, such as self-reported membership estimates and organizational structures.

The Carter Center wishes to express its deep thanks to all of the youth wing members, Nepali officials, political party representatives, civil society members, journalists, and citizens who have generously offered their time and energy to facilitate this report.

²The CPN-UML Youth Force was established in 2008 to counter the YCL, but in December 2009 was transferred under the direct control of the party in an effort to address concerns about allegations of negative YF activities.

³ International Crisis Group, Crisis Group Asia Reports No194, *Nepal's Political Rites of Passage*, September 29, 2010, p. 19.

⁴ The agreement is available at <http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/Agreement.to.Ammend.Constitution.2008-06-25.ENG.pdf>.

⁵ For example, in April 2009 the Maoists and UML signed a bilateral agreement following the murder of Prachanda Thaiba and subsequent violent clashes between the Youth Force and YCL in Butwal municipality the previous month. See "9 point agreement between Nepal Communist Party (UML) and Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)," April 12, 2009, available at: <http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/2009-04-13-9.Point.Agreement.UCPNM.UML.ENG.pdf>.

II. METHODOLOGY

The findings included in this report are based on data gathered by Carter Center observers from June 2009 through January 2011 as part of the Center's efforts to observe Nepal's ongoing peace process. Additionally, from September through December 2010, the Center deployed observers to collect detailed information on political party youth wings in 30 districts across the country.⁶ In January 2011, Carter Center observers revisited some of these districts to gauge YCL awareness of, and reactions to, the UCPN(M) Standing Committee decision on 20 December 2010 to "de-barrack" the YCL.⁷

For this report, Carter Center observers conducted 100 interviews with individual youth wing members, a majority of whom held posts of significant responsibility at the district, area, or VDC level. Observers also interviewed hundreds of government officials, political party representatives, civil society representatives, journalists, and citizens. In each interview, observers asked about youth wing membership, organizational structures, activities, sources of tension and clashes, and perceptions of youth wings. In some cases, identifying information has been withheld in order to maintain the security and confidentiality of the individuals with whom the Center spoke.

The Center did not gather information on other politically active youth organizations, such as student unions, or on other general youth organizations, such as youth clubs. Additionally, this report focuses mainly on youth wings affiliated to political parties, although some information related to identity group youth wings that are not party-affiliated is also included.

Finally, a note on the references to the CPN-UML's youth wing in this report: The Youth Force was created in mid-2008 following the CA election in order to counter YCL activities. According to the CPN-UML public information department, all activities of the Youth Force were suspended in December 2008 due to concerns about negative activities. This suspension was poorly enforced, however, and in December 2009 the YF was brought under the direct control of the party and merged into the main UML youth wing, newly renamed the Youth Federation Nepal (YFN). However, despite these central level decisions, Carter Center observers consistently found that UML party members, youth wing cadres and the general public did not have a clear understanding of the Youth Force's status and continued to refer to Youth Force activities in many districts.⁸ In general, interviewees tended to attribute constructive activities to the YFN and negative activities to the YF. This report follows this same general pattern, as it was not always possible for Carter Center observers to accurately determine which activities could be attributed to which organization.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Youth Wing Members

Most Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN-UML youth wing members interviewed were affiliated with their respective political parties before they joined the party youth wing. Most Tarun Dal and UML youth wing

⁶ Observers gathered information between September and December 2010 from two Mountain districts (Darchula and Dolakha), 17 Hill districts (Baitadi, Bhaktapur, Dadeldhura, Doti, Ilam, Jajarkot, Kaski, Kathmandu, Khotang, Lalitpur, Lamjung, Palpa, Parbat, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, and Sindhuli) and 11 Tarai districts (Banke, Dang, Jhapa, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Mahottari, Morang, Nawalparasi, Rautahat, Saptari, and Sarlahi).

⁷ "Maoists Want UNMIN After Jan 15," The Kathmandu Post, December 21, 2010: <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2010/12/20/top-story/maoists-want-unmin-after-jan-15/216266/>.

⁸ For example, a hill district Youth Force representative said that the Youth Force had been fully integrated into the YFN while a neighboring hill district Youth Force representative said that the Youth Force would remain intact as a standalone entity as before. Additionally, in a Tarai district, a UML leader said that the Youth Force was a part of the YFN while a YFN leader said that the Youth Force was independent of his organization.

cadres first became involved in student politics and then joined the respective political party youth wing. Many also said they were from politically “minded” or “affiliated” families.

Most YCL youth wing members interviewed were also affiliated with the Maoist party prior to their joining the YCL. In multiple districts, Carter Center observers met YCL members who were former PLA combatants. Many YCL cadres also entered the youth wing after joining the Maoist student union. However, some YCL cadres, notably in senior level positions, are former PLA combatants who were active during the decade-long conflict. They were then either “assigned” by the party to the YCL instead of going to the cantonments, or they entered the cantonments and then left voluntarily or were discharged.

Most identity based youth wing members interviewed say they joined to advance the rights of their own identity group. Nearly all Madhesi youth wing cadres said they joined because they were motivated to promote Madhesi rights. The vast majority were inspired by the 2007 Madhesi Andolan and some cited individual political leaders as inspiration. Most Limbuwan Volunteer (LV) cadres interviewed were previously affiliated with either the UCPN(M), UML or NC and joined the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) to “fight for a Limbuwan state.”

Many youth wing cadres are seeking a political career in the future. Nearly all YCL members interviewed expressed a strong desire to remain involved with the party in any capacity deemed appropriate by the party. Many Tarun Dal, UML YFN, and Madhesi party youth wing cadres are hoping to become high-ranking officials within the party or government. However, some expressed concern that they would not be able to afford to join politics full-time. A few Tarun Dal cadres also expressed concern about remaining with the party and noted a long and difficult process for moving up within the NC ranks.

B. Youth Wing Activities

Overall, there have been very few public activities conducted by any political party youth wings since June 2010. Central level UCPN(M), UML, and NC youth wing leaders acknowledged that activity levels have decreased. The main reasons cited for the lack of youth wing activities were: 1) no central level directives from the mother party, and 2) the national level political deadlock.

The YCL appears to be the largest and most active political party youth wing at the local level. The UML YFN appears to be the second largest and most active political party youth wing; the NC Tarun Dal has a presence in all districts, but is mostly inactive. Madhesi political parties have formed youth wings as well but their activities have been quite limited. Finally, a number of smaller parties and identity based groups have also formed youth wings. Of these, the FLSC LVs in the Eastern Region hills are by far the most active.

Youth wing members report activities including membership drives, support to party events, development works, community service, and public security. The Carter Center was able to verify a small number of these reported activities. Almost all youth wings say that, in addition to membership drives and support for mother party events, they have engaged in public service through activities such as road construction, street cleaning, temporary health camps, blood donation drives, tree planting, public campaigns to promote sanitary practices, and campaigns to curb smuggling, deceitful business practices, and “social evils.” However, such activities were often found to be difficult to verify.

Carter Center observers have also heard many reports of negative youth wing activities, primarily involving the YCL and, to a lesser extent, the CPN-UML Youth Force, which are aimed at obtaining financial gain and which have the effect of undermining political space, development, and public security. FLSC LVs were also implicated in the Eastern hills. In many districts, the YCL and, to a lesser extent, the UML Youth Force, have interfered in contract tender processes, been complicit in smuggling, solicited forced donations, and engaged in violent clashes. Additionally, in some districts, YCL has used intimidation and

violence to control political space. Finally, in the Eastern Hills observers heard some reports of FLSC LVs interfering in contract tender processes, and becoming involved in illegal logging.

Youth wing violence and clashes appear to have decreased. However, nearly all clashes involving youth wings include YCL cadres and most clashes have been between YCL and UML Youth Force cadres. The most direct sources of tension and conflicts involving youth wings have been around: efforts to influence contract tender processes; efforts to assert influence over selection processes for users groups or school management committees (SMCs)⁹; escalations of minor political disputes, personal disputes, or conflicts between student unions; and efforts to control - and in response, preserve - political space.

Despite a decrease in violence in the short-term, there appears to be a longer-term trend towards increased use of youth wings as “muscle power.” Both the financial benefits that YCL and YF members are accruing as well as the enhanced “muscle power” that comes with a more aggressive youth wing have created incentives for other parties to at least consider following in this line. The CPN-UML provides a sobering example of the challenges in trying to control such a force once it has been created.

C. YCL “Paramilitary Functioning”

YCL “paramilitary functioning” is difficult to assess, in large part due to the lack of agreement on a common definition of the term “paramilitary.” UML and NC representatives generally contend that YCL “communal living” (i.e., cadres living together in the same physical location) constitutes paramilitary functioning. By contrast, UCPN(M) representatives generally contend that YCL communal living does not constitute paramilitary functioning, but is merely “economical, ideological, and voluntary.”

The majority of YCL sites visited by the Carter Center did not appear to be organized in a military-style hierarchy. However, observers did find one site in Kaski which was intended to serve as a “rapid response force” and where military terminology was used by a small number of interviewees to describe the organization’s structure. Carter Center observers spoke with several individuals who described an organizational structure of platoons, brigades, and companies, although it was not clear if this was a current or previous structure. Other interviewees also spoke about the camp’s purpose to provide a “rapid response force” in case of any clashes or disputes in the Pokhara area.

The Carter Center found several instances of YCL living communally in government buildings and many instances of YCL living communally in private buildings. In none of these cases could it be determined that the YCL was organized in a military-style hierarchy or that such arrangements were party-mandated. More often than not, these arrangements seemed to be sanctioned, but not imposed, by the party, or were circumstantial given that observers met many YCL who had relocated from other districts and did not have a home in the area.

In some parts of the country, observers heard scattered reports of YCL conducting physical fitness or self-defense training; however, they did not find evidence nor hear credible reports of YCL using firearms. Following the Maoists’ May 2010 protest programs, observers have heard only a few subsequent reports in some parts of the country of sporadic trainings conducted. Physical fitness and self-defense trainings sometimes reportedly involve *lathis* and *khukuris*¹⁰ but not firearms.

⁹ Users groups are bodies responsible for the management of local resources such as water and timber as well as local development projects; school management committees are responsible for administering school property, approving curriculum, and hiring and managing certain categories of teachers.

¹⁰ *Lathis* are long sticks and *khukuris* are traditional Nepali knives.

Regardless of the terminology used, many government officials, non-Maoist party representatives, civil society representatives and citizens have expressed concern about the existence of YCL communal living sites. However, some citizens interviewed have also expressed positive sentiments. Those expressing concerns generally reference widely publicized incidents of violence and intimidation, often involving groups of cadres; the legacy of the conflict, especially in highly affected areas or where the presence of the state remains weak; and the fact some YCL district leaders and members are former PLA combatants.

IV. VOICES OF YOUTH WING MEMBERS

Carter Center observers conducted individual interviews with youth wing members in order to better understand who joins youth wings¹¹ and why, what they receive from their parties, and what their future aspirations are. This section of the report provides a broad overview of common responses. It is important to note that the sample of youth wing members interviewed reflects a bias towards more senior- level youth wing members rather than lower-level cadres, as these individuals were often most accessible to Carter Center observers.

A. Why did you join this youth wing?

Most Tarun Dal and UML YFN members interviewed first became involved in student politics and then joined the respective political party youth wing. Many also said they were from politically “minded” or “affiliated” families.¹² A Kaski Tarun Dal representative told observers, “I was in the NC student wing. My father was also in the NC and I was fascinated by the ideology of B.P. Koirala. With this background, I joined the Tarun Dal.” A Dadeldhura Tarun Dal representative joined because his father and grandfather were NC members. He became interested in politics at a young age and, because of family ties, believed the NC was a logical choice for him. Meanwhile, a Lamjung UML YFN representative told observers, “I was born and raised in a UML family. I agree with the ideology of the UML so I joined as soon as I could.” A Salyan UML YFN district representative said his father was an active NC member, but he was impressed by UML politics in the 1990s and joined the UML student union in eighth grade. Observers heard similar stories from across the country of family members’ political affiliations influencing young people’s decisions to join politics.

Many YCL cadres also entered the youth wing after joining the Maoist student union. However, some YCL cadres, notably in senior level positions, are former PLA combatants who were active during the decade-long conflict. Many YCL members spoke about their commitment to fighting injustice as a reason for their membership. A Dolakha YCL representative said he used to be a PLA combatant and wanted to continue fighting for the Maoist cause. He said that youths had been on the front line of the conflict and were integral to the insurgency. A YCL representative in the Tarai said, “I am from Rolpa district, the origin of the Maoists’ insurgency. There were ignorant people living in my locality. The state used to charge them [with supporting the Maoists] and the people were suffering...so I joined the Maoist party to revolt against this injustice...[When] our party decided to form the YCL I was told to join it...others were also brought from the PLA.” Two young Baitadi YCL cadres said they joined the Maoists in 2001 and claimed that many of their friends now served the party in different capacities: “during the conflict period, we were all the same, doing the same job. Now we are in different groups: some of our friends are involved in student politics while we are involved in the YCL.”

¹¹ Despite claims by most political party youth wings that approximately one-third of their members are women, Carter Center observers came across very few women in meetings with youth wing members. Members gave multiple reasons for this trend, including: social constraints, limited political awareness and education of women, female members allegedly living in more remote villages (and thus not present for observers to meet with), and “maternity leave.”

¹² In a small number of districts, observers noted rumors that in an effort to rapidly expand the Youth Force, the UML had also brought on individuals from questionable backgrounds simply as a measure to counterbalance YCL strength. The Carter Center was unable to either confirm or disprove these rumors. However, a similar sentiment was noted in a September 2010 International Crisis Group report: “In its attempt to increase the size of its youth wing, the UML has engaged with individuals with a record of criminal and violent activities, often *gundas* who were affiliated with the party less formally previously.” International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. 17.

Nearly all Madhesi youth wing cadres said they joined because they were motivated to promote Madhesi rights. The vast majority were inspired by the 2007 Madhesi Andolan and some cited individual political leaders as inspiration. A Mahottari Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Nepal) Youth Force (MJF(N)-YF) member said he decided to join the MJF during the Madhesi Andolan in order to promote Madhesi rights and help bring an end to discrimination. A Nawalparasi MJF (Democratic) Youth Forum (MJF(D)-YF) representative said that he attended some rallies after the Madhesi Andolan and realized how Madhesis were marginalized. He approached the party at an MJF(D) public rally where it was recruiting new members for its youth wing. An MJF(N)-YF Rautahat representative heard about the youth wing through radio advertisements and a microphone announcement, and joined because she “wanted to do something for Madhesi women.” Another Rautahat MJF(N)-YF representative said that prior to joining the party, he had been actively working on Madhesi issues. He joined the MJF because after attending political rallies led by Upendra Yadav, Bijay Gachhedar and others: “I thought, ‘how can this small number of leaders do everything?’ They need my help!”

Most Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC) Limbuwan Volunteers (LV) cadres interviewed were previously affiliated with either the UCPN(M), CPN-UML or NC and then later joined the FLSC to “fight for a Limbuwan state.” Many joined the FLSC when it was unified and only subsequently became affiliated with one of the FLSC factions. A Jhapa FLSC-Sanjuhang¹³ representative said, “I was an NC member. When the Maoists launched the ‘people’s war’ I supported and worked for them, but in 2000 I came to the conclusion that they will not implement their lofty ideology and I joined the FLSC.” An FDNF-affiliated FLSC cadre from Ilam said, “I used to be a member of the UML Youth Force, but decided to join LV because I wanted to join the movement for a Limbuwan state.” An Ilam FLSC-Sanjuhang representative said, “I was formerly a UCPN(M) cadre, but I abandoned the party. After studying communist ideology closely, I realized that it was incompatible with the concept of ethnic liberation...I joined LV because I believe that our generation has a responsibility to fight for the Limbuwan state.”

B. What do you receive from your party?

YCL cadres said that “full-timers” do not receive salary but are provided with food and accommodation; some also said that the party provides them with some money to cover basic needs, transportation, and communications costs. “Part-timers” do not receive the same benefits as “full-timers” except during party events. A Nawalparasi YCL representative told observers, “I am a full-time cadre. I own no private property and the party looks after me. I go to the people in the village and they give me food and shelter. The party also gives me some money for transportation and communication.” A Kailali YCL representative said the party does not provide salary, but only “limited pocket money” to cover basic needs. He further said that, as many YCL cadres are from a “war background and can’t go home,” they have been working as full-timers and are provided with some food, accommodation, transportation, and simple clothing. Cadres interviewed also consistently mentioned receiving political training from the party and a few said they had received physical training.

By contrast, YFN, Tarun Dal, and Madhesi party youth wing cadres said they do not receive accommodation or spending money from their parties. Some said they received limited financial support during party events, while others said they were expected to make personal donations to hold programs. A few NC and UML youth wing members also mentioned receiving training from the party or receiving occasional help finding employment. A Palpa UML YFN representative told observers that “the YCL get everything: food, shelter, salaries, etc. In a way, this is good because they can devote all their time to the party, learning and understanding the party’s ideology. I would love to devote all of my time to the UML, but I cannot because I also have to earn money.” A Nawalparasi Tarai Madhes Democratic Party (TMDP) Youth Front (YF)

¹³ There are three main factions of the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC), led by Kumar Lingden, Sanjuhang Palungwa, and Misekhang Thamsuhang, respectively. Each maintains a youth wing known as the Limbuwan Volunteers. Throughout this report, the FLSC faction led by Kumar Lingden is referred to as the “FDNF-affiliated FLSC” as per the request of the organization.

representative told observers, “We receive nothing from our party. No money, no training. I spend money from my own pocket when needed for the organization.” A Nawalparasi MJF(D)-YF representative said, “We tell youth at our public programs that the party will not provide any money so don’t join us if you expect any [money] from us.” The only possible exception to this trend was the FLSC LVs. An FDNF-affiliated FLSC cadre in Ilam told observers that “the party doesn’t give salary to LVs, even full-timers, but it does provide accommodation and food to some of them,” indicating that FLSC may be attempting to follow the YCL model.

C. What are your future plans or aspirations?

Nearly all YCL cadres expressed a strong desire to remain involved with the UCPN(M) in any capacity deemed appropriate by the party; many YCL members mentioned cadres who sacrificed their lives for the Maoist cause during the conflict as an inspiration. A Kailali YCL representative said, “I have lived my life for the party and will do so as long as I am alive. The party is life for us. I have no plan to leave the party.” A Khotang YCL representative told observers “I have no other thoughts but politics. I’ve even told my wife and family not to expect much from me because the party is my priority.” A Kaski YCL representative explained that “my *jat*¹⁴ is communist, I am a communist *jat*. I will stay with the communist party until my last breath. I will continue with the revolt until Nepal has changed. I want to change my country to be more equal and have opportunity. I do not care about, and have no ambition for, chairs [i.e., higher political office].” A Dolakha YCL representative said he would remain politically active for the rest of his life but did not have specific ambitions within the party: “I sit here in this [Maoist] office and see all the pictures of the martyrs surrounding and looking down on me. This inspires me to be part of the movement.”¹⁵

Many Tarun Dal, UML YFN, and Madhesi party youth wing cadres are seeking a political career in the future, most often hoping to become high-ranking officials within the party or government. A Dolakha UML YFN representative said he had spent his whole life in politics, wanted to move up as far as possible within the party, and “would only stop once it was physically impossible to carry on.” A Banke Tarun Dal representative said he hoped to remain involved in politics and wanted to join the NC as a central committee member after turning 45 and “aging out” of the Tarun Dal. In Kaski, a UML YFN representative told observers that “I will be in politics and I would like to go to the central committee of our party.” A Saptari MJF(N)-YF representative told Carter Center observers that “I plan to stay involved in politics because, for me, politics is life! I will soon be moving into the mother party and hope to compete to be an MP in the next elections.” A Nawalparasi MJF(D)-YF representative said, “I see a good future for myself in the party. I hope to be a future leader of the party and a future leader of Nepal. Maybe President of Nepal.”

Despite a desire for a political career, some Tarun Dal, UML YFN and Madhesi party youth wing cadres expressed concern that financial considerations would prevent them from entering politics full time. A few Tarun Dal cadres expressed concern about remaining with the party and noted a long and difficult process for moving up within the NC ranks. A Dadeldhura Tarun Dal representative said he wanted to stay in politics but that his family was not supportive because of the perceived financial risk. A Sarlahi NC representative said he wanted to remain in politics but thought it was difficult for local-level leaders to make progress in the party. He said one had to follow a strict party procedure to be promoted: “I want to be a central leader, but it’s a long and difficult process.” A Jajarkot UML YFN cadre said that he was involved in politics to serve society, but added that one has to be from a wealthy family to “afford” to do politics and he is not. Finally, a Kathmandu TMDP-YF representative said he was training to be a civil engineer, but wanted to remain committed to politics even if he could not make it his full-time career: “there are not enough intellectuals who

¹⁴ Identity group.

¹⁵ However, although not represented in the individual interviews here, some Maoist representatives have expressed concerns to Carter Center observers about the level of dedication of YCL cadres recruited after 2006 (see section V.C. of this report and International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. 17).

are involved in politics. The problem is with the system. To change the system, one has to be a politician, but there is not the [salary] to make this a viable option.”

When asked about their personal future plans, most FLSC LV cadres claimed that “the future is Limbuwan.” An Ilam FLSC-Sanjuhang representative said, “History has given my generation of youth a responsibility to acquire a Limbuwan state...when my time comes, I will hand over responsibility graciously to the next generation.” A Jhapa FDNF-affiliated FLSC representative said his future was a free Limbuwan state, while another FLSC-Sanjuhang representative in Ilam echoed this sentiment: “the only plans for the future relate to a Limbuwan state.”

V. YOUTH WING ACTIVITIES

Youth wing activities can be characterized across a broad spectrum from positive and constructive activities to negative and aggressive or violent activities. In some cases, the same activities listed proudly by youth wing members as positive achievements are considered by the district administration, other parties, or community members as negative; “public security” related activities are a good example of this dynamic. Additionally, observers have found that government officials, members of the private sector, civil society representatives, journalists, and citizens generally do not or are unable to make any distinction between mother party, youth wing, sister wing, and student union members – making it at times difficult to verify whether youth wing members did in fact participate in certain activities. This section covers overall levels of recent activity by youth wings, activities self-reported by youth wings, other activities most frequently reported to observers and which often lead to tensions or clashes between youth wings, the potential long-term trend towards increased use of youth wings as “muscle,” and public perceptions of youth wings.

A. Overall Levels of Public Activity

Since June 2010, overall public activities of political party youth wings have been limited. Despite this low level of activity, Carter Center observers found that comparatively the YCL has been the most active youth wing. Cadres in Nawalparasi, Dadeldhura, Sarlahi, Bhaktapur, and other districts noted that no YCL activities had been organized recently; however, one said: “during a popular movement, we’ll be there on the front line.” The UML YFN was generally found to be the second most active youth wing at the local level, although it too reported few public activities in recent months.

By comparison, the Tarun Dal is significantly less publicly active than either the YCL or the YFN and in some districts appears to be almost completely inactive. Most Tarun Dal leaders said that they expected activity levels to increase in the coming months, after their general convention. Several Madhesi political parties have formed youth wings, concentrated almost exclusively in the Tarai, but their activity is also reportedly quite limited. The most notable activity conducted by Madhesi youth wings to date appears to be the obstruction of the voter registration process in several Tarai districts in October 2010. Finally, a number of smaller parties and identity based groups have also formed youth wings. Of these, the FLSC LVs are by far the most active. Others, from the Brahmin and Chhetri Samaj to the RJM’s All Nepal Youth Association (ANYA) were found to be conducting few public activities. The main reasons cited for lack of youth wing activities were a lack of central level directives from the mother party and the national level political deadlock.

B. Activities Reported by Youth Wings

Members of youth wings were keen to emphasize to Carter Center observers their engagement in community service and other “positive works.” Typical activities cited by youth wing members during the observation period included: party building and membership drives, awareness raising, development and community service, support for mother party events, and public security provision. However, these activities were mostly self-reported and apparently low-impact; almost no local citizens other than youth wing members were aware of or

noted “positive” activities of youth wings when asked. Carter Center observers were also rarely able to verify claims of constructive youth wing activity at the VDC level.

Nearly all youth wings mentioned party building and membership drives as primary activities. Many others, especially Madhesi party youth wing members, also mentioned providing support for their mother party’s events at the district or VDC level. YCL representatives in many districts spoke of membership drives to encourage young people to become communists and join the YCL. In Sarlahi, Tarun Dal representatives explained that they were trying to recruit new members to gain supporters the party lost after the 2008 CA elections. MJF(N) youth wing cadres and citizens in Rautahat, Sarlahi, Morang, Banke and Nawalparasi noted that the party’s cadres visited their districts to raise awareness and recruit new party members. Youth wing members across the country and from all youth wings made similar comments.¹⁶ Additionally, support for mother party events was also cited, especially by Madhesi party youth wing members. For example, during an observer visit to Mahottari, MJF(N)-YF representatives were found to be busy organizing the visits of party president Upendra Yadav and a local CA member.

Political party youth wing members also reported development, community service, and “awareness raising” activities, such as blood donation drives and tree planting campaigns, and saw these as positive contributions to their local communities. The Carter Center was able to verify some of these reports. For example, observers verified that the YCL in Rautahat and Kavrepalanchowk had done some physical infrastructure work related to road maintenance and building a bus stop. Additionally, the YCL, YFN, and Tarun Dal were all credibly reported as assisting with flood prevention in Kanchanpur under the direction of the DAO. In Salyan, there appeared to be at least one credible case where the UML YFN had stopped the illegal activities of a food contractor and turned him over to the police, and in Kailali the team verified that the UML YFN distributed fruits to a zonal hospital. Finally, some TMDP Youth Front members in Sarlahi reportedly helped build guest houses that were opened by party President Mahantha Thakur and welcomed by the community.

Most of the activities self-reported by youth wings could not be verified by Carter Center observers. The YCL mentioned cleaning campaigns and “empowerment programs” in Jhapa and other districts. UML YFN representatives said they had submitted a memo in Rautahat to improve the treatment of Nepali citizens crossing the border; conducted employment skills trainings in Nawalparasi; and conducted “awareness raising” campaigns on the dangers of deforestation in Dadeldhura.¹⁷ The Tarun Dal reported organizing a vision testing clinic for villagers in Khotang, while Madhesi party youth wings talked about tree planting, pesticide sprays against disease, cleaning campaigns, health clinics, and campaigns to promote the inclusion of Madhesis in state security forces. FLSC LV also noted “social work” for the public benefit, including helping flood victims, cleaning programs, various rescue operations, and ridding villages of drug abuse and dacoit activity. Finally, the Matrika Yadav-led CPN(M) Youth People’s Security Force (YPSF) claimed their primary activities were monitoring distribution of VDC budget funds, tracking implementation of development activities, and reporting corrupt activities to district administration.

The YCL, the CPN-UML’s YF, and the FLSC LVs noted public security as a key activity and cited examples such as prevention of smuggling. Though always mentioned by the parties in a constructive context, in reality these activities presented a mixed or in some cases clearly negative picture. During the Dashain and Tihar holidays, YCL cadres in a number of districts, seemingly following a central level directive, reported being mobilized to curb criminal activities or “social evils” such as gambling and alcohol consumption. YCL representatives also spoke about efforts to prevent smuggling in multiple districts along the Nepal-India

¹⁶ However, Carter Center observers reported that frequent claims of membership drives were not supported by evidence from VDC visits, leading observers to be skeptical about the reports. Some teams reported that youth wing members often seemed to mention “membership drives” because they could not come up with any other activities to report.

¹⁷ This claim was not supported by other interviewees.

border. For example, according to an official in Kanchanpur, the YCL was instrumental in helping to reclaim timber that was going to be smuggled out of the district and in controlling criminal groups hiding in the forests. However, reports of YCL efforts to prevent smuggling were often conflicting or implicated cadres in benefitting improperly from such efforts. A UCPN-M representative in the same district told observers of how YCL cadres had received a reward for turning in a load of smuggled mobile phones. However, another interviewee reported that the YCL allegedly kept as much as two-thirds of the batch of mobile phones that were being smuggled, and only turned the remaining one-third over to authorities to collect a proportion of their value as a reward. In Kailali as well as Rautahat, interviewees also reported credible allegations of YCL complicity in smuggling, such as charging smugglers a fee for passage across the border.

The UML's YFN and YF representatives also reported activities allegedly geared towards preventing smuggling. Several interviewees in Rautahat suggested that the UML YFN sometimes caught those with contraband goods from India, such as food, fertilizers, or machine parts, and escorted them back to the customs office to pay the appropriate taxes. A UML YFN leader in Bhaktapur told observers that the youth wing last year stopped vehicles they caught illegally transporting goods from the Nepal-China border in Sindhupalchowk, although this could not be verified by the observer team. However, as with the YCL, observers also heard allegations of UML YF complicity in smuggling activities such as illegal logging and timber smuggling. In Kailali, observers were told that UML YF was running a highly organized operation charging fees to smugglers crossing the border.¹⁸

FLSC LVs also reported public security as a primary focus of their activities. In Jhapa and Ilam, FDNF-affiliated FLSC representatives spoke about LV efforts aimed at ensuring security, countering illegal activities, and "stopping bad practices" such as drug abuse, smuggling, and trafficking. In Jhapa, FLSC-Sanjuhang representatives said that the Limbuwan Militia "patrols" the district to provide security for party members, although citizens did not confirm this. LVs also said they engaged in dispute resolution at the VDC level, including issuing verdicts and imposing punishments against offenders.¹⁹

C. Other Activities and Sources of Tension Between Youth Wings

While the previous section covered self-reported youth wing activities, many activities reported to Carter Center observers by district administration officials, police, political parties, civil society, community members, and others were significantly less constructive and in many cases explicitly in violation of the commitments agreed to by political parties in the peace process. This was particularly the case in regards to the YCL, and to a lesser extent the CPN-UML Youth Force. While Carter Center observers did hear a very small number of reports of negative Tarun Dal activities,²⁰ the Tarun Dal was implicated to a far lesser degree than the YCL or UML Youth Force. This may be simply a reflection of the fact that the Tarun Dal is overall much less active than the other two party youth wings. In general, Madhesi youth wings were also not frequently implicated in activities such as interference in tender processes or soliciting forced donations.

YCL cadres, and to a lesser extent UML YF and FLSC LVs, appear engaged in low-profile efforts aimed at obtaining financial gain and consolidating party strength at the local level, but direct levels of violence appear to have decreased. Such activities, covered in depth below, appear to be tolerated or tacitly supported –

¹⁸ In neighboring Kanchanpur, responding to allegations of UML YF involvement in smuggling, a UML leader said that it might have been true when the Youth Force was active in the past, but is no longer the case.

¹⁹ These claims were corroborated by independent sources in some districts, notably in Jhapa. See The Carter Center, "Brief Overview of Political Dispute Resolution at the Local Level in Nepal," December 30, 2010, pp. 4-5. Available at: http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/nepal-PoliticalDisputeResOverview-123010_en.pdf.

²⁰ In Kaski and Sindhuli, observers were told that NC-affiliated groups were also interfering in tender processes: in Kaski, several interviewees spoke about the "LG group," a for-hire criminal gang with alleged ties to the NC, being enlisted to counter YCL interference in tender processes and to itself interfere in favor of other contractors. In Sindhuli, an NC representative admitted to his party's use of Tarun Dal-related gang members against YCL cadres to preserve political space in the district.

if not directed – by district leadership. YCL complicity in smuggling activities, intimidation of other parties and their supporters, interference in tender processes, forced donations and unlawful taxation were regularly mentioned by non-Maoist interviewees across districts visited. Additionally, in some cases Maoist representatives themselves complained that YCL cadres recruited after 2006 are financially motivated rather than politically dedicated to the cause. Meanwhile, Youth Force complicity in smuggling activities, interference in tender processes, forced donations or taxation was also referenced. Observers also heard reports that FLSC LVs from each of the three factions were involved in activities such as interference in tender processes, abductions, and illegal logging.²¹

Additionally, since the outset of its observation efforts, the Center has reported on many youth wing clashes at the local level, primarily involving the YCL, and often between YCL and UML Youth Force cadres.²² While clashes were frequent in the early phase of the Center’s observation, the number of youth wing clashes appears to have decreased in the last half of 2010. When clashes have occurred, their causes are largely attributable to competition for political space or financial gain. The most direct sources of tension are: efforts to influence contract tender processes; efforts to assert influence over selection processes for users group or management committees; escalation of small disputes or conflicts between student unions; efforts to engage in dispute resolution; and efforts to control – and, in response, preserve – political space.

The YCL, and to a lesser extent the CPN-UML YF, have been interfering in development contract tender processes in many districts. Such interference generally involves directing local government officials to issue contracts to party-supported contractors or approaching contractors to seek percentages of the award, protection fees, or employment for cadres. Such activities can lead to tensions or clashes between the YCL and YF. As reported previously by the Carter Center a common activity of YCL and to a lesser extent UML YF cadres is interference in tender processes. YCL interference is cited by local stakeholders more than that of any other group, and in one case in Kailali observers directly witnessed attempts by YCL cadres to prevent contractors from bidding. In Baitadi it was reported that YCL cadres request donations of between one and four percent of the total contract value from contractors in exchange for supporting their bids. After tenders are issued, YCL cadres often approach contractors to seek a percentage of the award, protection fees, or employment; some contractors reportedly pay for fear of repercussion. For example, an interviewee in Dadeldhura cited a case in May 2010 where the YCL requested commissions or jobs for its cadres in return for cooperation with contractors. Meanwhile in a Hill district, an official of a construction company that had been awarded an infrastructure development contract told observers of a recent case where Youth Force and UML-affiliated individuals requested advance fees or regular commissions from the company to ensure an “interference-free” working environment. Youth Force cadres reportedly then targeted an area on part of the project and solicited payments from timber and gravel transport vehicles.

Political party efforts to influence contract tender processes seem to be one of the most common sources of tension and clashes between youth wing cadres, notably between YCL and UML Youth Force cadres. (Observers have also heard of one case involving NC-affiliated cadres.) For example, in early 2009, YCL and UML Youth Force clashed several times in Lamjung over competition for contracts for delivery of building materials and valuable recycling materials on a large-scale hydroelectricity project, the Middle Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project. Observers were told by interviewees that, when there were clashes, both youth wings tended to bring in “unidentified persons” from other districts so that local people would not be able to recognize them.

²¹Due to the fact that each FLSC faction has an LV, interviewees were generally unable to distinguish which LV youth wing was responsible for reported activities.

²²See The Carter Center, “First Interim Report,” released on August 26, 2009: <http://cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/pr/Nepal-first-interim-report-082609-eng.pdf> and The Carter Center, “Second Interim Report,” November 29, 2009: http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/democracy/TCC%20Security%20Report_English.pdf.

Allegations of forced donations and unlawful taxation by the YCL were reported by government officials, businessmen and ordinary citizens, although they have decreased significantly since the Maoists' May 2010 protest programs. UML Youth Force, Limbuwan Volunteers, and Tharu Volunteers (TVs) are also implicated in similar activities to varying degrees. Many interviewees spoke of tax collection posts established by YCL cadres, primarily targeting commodities transporters traveling along the road. Observers have found that reported posts in districts such as Ilam and Kanchanpur no longer exist, although they continue to receive reports that YCL cadres are still collecting taxes through local offices or other informal channels which are not situated on the road. Additionally, prior to the Maoists' nationwide protest programs in May 2010, YCL cadres pressured citizens, shopkeepers, and wealthy businessmen for donations ranging from in-kind food and housing contributions up to approximately 500,000 NRs. Since that time, donation requests have reportedly decreased but are still common. In Kailali, several sources told observers that the implicit threat that accompanies persistent YCL requests compel individuals to give donations. One interviewee noted that those targeted cannot openly speak against such requests for fear of reprisal, saying "everyone knows it's going on and who is responsible, but it's dangerous to talk."

Reports of Youth Force taxation appear to have generally decreased in districts visited. In Kanchanpur, observers visited a site near the Indian border where a previously known Youth Force taxation post no longer exists. However, while such posts may no longer exist, observers continue to receive reports that, like YCL, Youth Force cadres are continuing to collect taxes through informal channels which are not situated on the road. There have also been a few reports of forced donation requests by Youth Force cadres, notably from business community members in Kailali and Morang.

All three FLSC factions have reportedly deployed LV cadres to collect donations. In previous reports, the Center has noted that FLSC cadres primarily seek funds from business owners and commodity exporters; in some cases, cadres have used threatening language and imposed deadlines for making payments to press their requests.²³ However, in December 2010, FLSC representatives told observers that only voluntary donations are received. In Ilam, an FLSC-Sanjuhang LV representative told observers that LV cadres are responsible for collecting donations from wealthy individuals while an FDNF-affiliated FLSC representative in Jhapa revealed the group's plan to ask every citizen in Limbuwan to provide ten rupees each and in-kind food donations. In November, observers were told by FDNF-affiliated FLSC LV representatives that cadres would soon be deployed to raise 50,000,000 NRs through donations and tax collection to support activities aimed at bringing about a Limbuwan state; one representative in Ilam said that LVs will begin collecting taxes along the Mechi highway in the coming months.

Finally, TV cadres are also reportedly collecting taxes from saw mills, brick factories, contractors and those benefiting from river resources in districts where the TV are active. TVs claim to have an arrangement in cooperation with the district administration in Kanchanpur to collect taxes on resources extracted from rivers, such as stones, although observers could not verify this claim. In other cases they ask for voluntary taxes during specific functions. They claim that most people are convinced to pay when their rights under ILO 169 are explained to them. There is no fixed amount for taxes, which are reportedly proportional to the individual's income. All taxes collected are reportedly handed over to the Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC).

A significant number of interviewees have told observers about acts of YCL intimidation, notably efforts to control political space and influence local level elections and position appointments. In some cases, YF or other party cadres have attempted to push back against the YCL, and this has led to heightened tensions and clashes. In Gorkha in March 2010, a vehicle carrying a central level Tarun Dal leader visiting the district to participate in a party program was attacked by a group of YCL cadres throwing stones and carrying

²³ Additional information on, and examples of, FLSC donation requests and taxation were included in the Carter Center's August 2009 and November 2009 reports, op. cit.

lathis.²⁴ In Kaski, a clash ensued between Maoist and YCL cadres and RJM ANYA cadres during an RJM anti-federalism rally in March 2010; trade union members and YCL cadres reportedly attacked and injured eight RJM cadres as they passed through a main intersection.²⁵ In Rukum, observers were told that a group of YCL cadres disrupted a UML meeting at the VDC level, attacking a journalist covering the meeting and prompting a clash between YCL and UML cadres. And during the Maoists' protest programs in late 2009 and early 2010, observers noted multiple reports of clashes involving YCL cadres who were displaying black flags to government officials, including, for example, a clash with the Tarun Dal in Chitwan in October 2009.

In multiple locations, observers have also reported cases where YCL cadres have sought to reverse unfavorable school management committee (SMC) election outcomes. In Salyan, YCL and Maoist cadres attacked an NC member in mid-2010 after a Maoist-backed candidate lost an SMC election; in June, more than 50 YCL cadres reportedly attacked 10 NC sympathizers following SMC elections in Gorkha, leading to retaliation and escalation, with local citizens expressing concern that even an agreement reached between the parties to resolve the issue did not last more than a day; and, in Kaski, eyewitnesses told observers that several dozen YCL cadres attacked citizens taking part in SMC elections in August when it appeared that the results would not be in their favor.²⁶

Finally, in two districts, aggressive YCL leadership has translated into aggressive cadre actions, although these cases appear to be extreme and isolated examples. In Ramechhap and Sindhuli, YCL under the leadership of Rajan Dahal were responsible for several violent attacks and threats against opposition parties and supporters. Dahal was arrested just before Dashain 2010 on allegations that he attacked a UML representative in Ramechhap in May 2009. Following his arrest, interviewees from all sides reported improved relations between political parties and youth wings.

Unlike the YCL, interviewees rarely mentioned incidents of Youth Force intimidating other parties and their supporters or seeking to control political space. Observers heard only one report, in Salyan, of UML YF seeking to exert influence over users groups. However, because the CPN-UML YF see one of their primary functions as providing a check against the YCL, there have been clashes over political space. During the May 2010 Maoist protest programs, for example, Youth Force cadres were mobilized in districts such as Dhankuta to prevent YCL cadres from harassing shopkeepers who defied the Maoist general strike, in some places leading to violent clashes between YCL and Youth Force cadres. More recently, UML YF representatives in Ilam and Jhapa spoke broadly about the UML YF role in opposing YCL activities, such as strikes and donation drives.

In a few cases, observers have noted that youth wing cadres have inserted themselves into private disputes, or have been requested to intervene on behalf of individuals involved in such disputes. The benefits for youth wings can be both political and financial, but engagement can also risk escalation into violence. In Dolakha, interviewees told observers that many disputes became politicized by political party involvement (by youth wings, student unions, or other political party members); one interviewee said that “political parties have a vested interest in mediating personal disputes” while another added that “this invites greater social division and makes villages harder to police.” In Salyan, a police official reported that when a contractor failed to pay laborers an agreed upon wage, the unpaid workers complained to the Maoists and YCL

²⁴ The Tarun Dal program was being organized to show solidarity for a district level Tarun Dal leader who had earlier been attacked by YCL cadres who accused him of violating a bandh.

²⁵ An RJM representative claimed that they had informed the Maoists days in advance of their plans to hold a rally and that the Maoists later decided to hold a rally on the same day as a means of provoking conflict with RJM. A UCPN(M) representative claimed that the Maoists' rally was the result of a late central-level directive and that RJM cadres were responsible for provoking the attack. Non-party interviewees believed that the clash was an effort by the Maoists to send a message that anti-federalism activities would not be tolerated anywhere.

²⁶ The Maoists subsequently appointed their own candidate and announced via FM radio that the SMC had been formed under UCPN(M) chairmanship; when later asked about the incident, a Kaski UCPN(M) representative acknowledged that party cadres “were involved in the capture.”

cadres allegedly bound the contractor and dragged him through the market before beating him. Although citizens reportedly identified the individual responsible for the beating, he has not been arrested due to party protection. In Kapilvastu, civil society representatives reported that the Maoists were requested by a local Muslim community group to seize a piece land on which to build a school.

Representatives of all three FLSC factions also touted the role that LV plays in dispute resolution and noted that the group issued verdicts and punishments against guilty offenders. The FLSC-Sanjuhang faction said that while it dissolved its “Justice and Conduct Committees,” LVs still engaged in conflict resolution activities to provide “social justice.”²⁷ In Ilam, an FDNF-affiliated FLSC LV representative said that LVs intervened where police failed to act, judging and punishing offenders, sometimes through beatings and detentions. In neighboring Jhapa, an FDNF-affiliated FLSC LV representative noted that such interventions were undertaken in cooperation with police, with the aim of “providing justice” to the public; however, the police denied that such cooperation took place. An FLSC-Misekhang LV representative said that dispute resolution was the youth wing’s main activity and told observers that guilty offenders were subjected to physical punishment, detention, or transferred to police as appropriate.²⁸ FLSC LV involvement in dispute resolution activities has raised some concerns among some human rights activists who believe it could be harmful to disputants. An activist provided a recent example where a Limbu woman had a strong court case against her husband, but her husband arranged for an LV to come and “persuade” her to drop her case and settle informally.

In addition to dispute resolution efforts by youth wings, observers have also noted that private disputes, minor political disputes, or disputes between student unions have a tendency to draw in youth wing cadres and escalate into serious clashes. In Surkhet, a series of reportedly apolitical clashes involving YCL and UML or UML Youth Force cadres resulted in the death of at least two YCL cadres; although the causes of the incidents were reportedly not political, they caused deterioration in relations between the Maoists and UML in the district. Also, in Myagdi, a curfew was enforced following a minor clash between YCL and UML Youth Force in early 2009; the source of the conflict was reportedly a remark made by a UML district representative against a Maoist CA member in a local meeting.

Additionally, in some cases, clashes between student unions, primarily arising due to elections or selection of staff, have escalated and drawn in youth wing cadres. For example, in October 2009, YCL and UML Youth Force clashed in Bhojpur over the April 2009 appointment of six junior-level employees at a local campus. UCPN(M) and NC student wings claimed that the elections were politically biased, alleging that those selected were all UML supporters. After months passed without the allegations being addressed, the UCPN(M) student wing assaulted the supposedly UML-affiliated campus chief. This action prompted a UML Youth Force member and three UML wing student union members to attack the YCL district representative. The CDO subsequently imposed a district curfew to prevent further attacks and an all-party meeting was called to resolve the conflict.

D. Youth Wings as “Muscle Power”

Observers have noted two seemingly contradictory trends: first, that in the short-term youth wing violence and clashes appear to have decreased, but second that the creation of “youth forces” by various parties and the LVs in the Eastern Hills appears to indicate a longer-term trend towards greater aggression by youth wings in Nepal.

²⁷ The Justice and Conduct Committees (JCC) appear to have been modeled after the Maoists’ conflict-era People’s Courts. A Sanjuhang LV Jhapa representative told observers that the group dissolved the “highly effective” JCC over a year and a half ago due to criticism that they were maintaining a parallel justice system.

²⁸ One civil society group claimed that FLSC cadres have handed over individuals involved in “heinous crimes” such as rape and murder to the police. However, police representatives interviewed were unaware of any cases where an FLSC faction had transferred criminals to law enforcement officers. Meanwhile, three other civil society representatives claimed that they had heard of cases where youth wings, not specifically LV, handed over smugglers to the police; they argued that this happens only when an agreement between smugglers and youth wing cadres regarding an appropriate “commission” cannot be reached.

As mentioned previously, youth in Nepal have also been used in the past to serve a similar function. However, in the last few years the role of the YCL in particular in providing “muscle power” and financial gain to the UCPN(M) has led to pressure on other parties to form similar organizations.²⁹

The CPN-UML created its Youth Force after its loss in the 2008 CA elections. Its subsequent, only partly successful attempts to rein in the Youth Force following negative allegations of their activities provides a sobering example of the difficulties in controlling such a force once it has been created. In the NC, Tarun Dal President Mahendra Yadav told the Carter Center that he is facing pressure from district-level representatives to take a more proactive approach to counter aggressive activities by other youth wings, notably the YCL. He cited an example in late 2008 when hundreds of NC cadres in Dolakha organized a march to demand the formation of a “Tarun Dasta”, i.e., a youth force.³⁰ Observers were told that Tarun Dal efforts to form a “Tarun Dasta” in neighboring Sindhupalchowk in 2009 were also quashed by NC central level leadership. In Kailali, a Tarun Dal representative told Carter Center observers he had asked the party for “more freedom” to respond to YCL attacks. At the national level, there have also been several debates about formation of a “youth force” organization, but to date the NC has refrained from taking this step.

Additionally, three Madhesi parties – MJF(N), TMDP³¹ and SP-Nepal – have also apparently established or are in the process of establishing “youth force” wings. These youth forces appear to be small groups that primarily exist to exhibit party strength. Some Madhesi youth force members have participated in physical fitness trainings but seemingly have not posed threats to security in any locations; observers have not heard any reports that implicate Madhesi youth force cadres in intimidation, violence or clashes with other groups.

Finally, multiple LV representatives drew comparisons between the LV command structure and that of the Maoists’ PLA. An FDNF-affiliated FLSC Ilam LV representative told observers that before becoming a member of its “regular” LV force – a “liberation army” similar to the PLA that can be mobilized quickly – a cadre must first serve in the PLA-modeled LV field-civil command. Another Ilam LV cadre told observers that LVs live communally in two houses with 50 or 60 members staying together to be available “if needed.” A non-party-affiliated interviewee in Jhapa referred to LVs as a kind of “rapid response” force that can be mobilized “within an hour” if necessary.³² An FLSC-Sanjuhang Jhapa LV representative told observers that the majority of LVs constitute the “Limbuwan Militia” in which service is a prerequisite before becoming a full LV member. He said the group sees the LVs as a future Limbuwan “security force,” but stressed that cadre trainings are “non-violent” and geared towards ensuring “peace and security.”

E. Public Perceptions of Youth Wings

As noted previously, observers found that citizens are often unable to distinguish between political party cadres who are youth wing members and those who are not. Citizens generally have limited awareness of youth wings, with perceptions formed either through direct exposure or media reports. The youth wing of which most interviewees were aware was the YCL; some were aware of UML YF while others knew of the existence of the Tarun Dal and, in the Eastern Hills, some were aware of FLSC LVs.³³

²⁹ This sentiment was expressed to the Carter Center in interviews with senior CPN-UML leaders, and is also reported in International Crisis Group, op. cit. p. 13 footnote 94 and p. 24 footnotes 186 and 187.

³⁰ See “Political Youth,” Nepali Times, September 12, 2008, <http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/issue/2008/09/12/FromtheNepaliPress/15209>.

³¹ Information on the TMDP youth force was gathered prior to the party’s split in December 2010.

³² In a December 2010 visit to Jhapa, observers were told by FDNF-affiliated FLSC and FLSC-Sanjuhang representatives that there were no LV communal houses in the district; however, both claimed to be able to rapidly mobilize hundreds of cadres quickly on motorcycles and buses if necessary.

³³ Citizen awareness of youth wings was often highly limited outside of district headquarters. Even in districts where the Maoists maintain a stronghold, awareness of the YCL was often low; one woman in Rolpa knew about the existence of the YCL because they wore track suits with the organization’s name and logo, but she did not know what they were doing. In Jajarkot, half of the citizens

In districts where youth wing activity has been especially low, such as in the Central and Eastern Tarai, general perceptions of youth wings are largely neutral; a journalist in Rautahat captured the sentiment of many interviewees: “my perception of them is neither positive nor negative as they don’t appear to be involved in much work at the moment.” However, where youth wings have been more active, perceptions of them were often dismissive or critical. In the Mid-Western Region, opinion of youth wings seemed to range from “unnoticeable and unimportant” to “negative and engaged in destructive behavior.” In Lamjung, one woman said, “Youth wings are no good. They only cause fights. Even small problems become big because of them. All the youth wings are bad.”

There were very few positive remarks made about youth wing activities. Of interviewees aware of youth wings, most associated them with negative actions, including violence, intimidation, forced donation requests, smuggling, and interference in police affairs, tender processes, and private disputes. Some interviewees perceived youth wings to be primarily oriented towards obtaining financial gain. In Banke, a civil society representative said that youth wings are only active when there is the potential to generate income. Although UML YF and FLSC LVs are also implicated, the YCL is most often cited as being behind money-making initiatives either for the mother party or for individual benefit.

Among individuals aware of youth wings, there also exists considerable public distrust and even fear, particularly of the YCL. In some districts, this appears to be due in part to negative incidents, whether they occurred locally or were reported in the media, as well as in part to the legacy of the conflict. There is also a widespread perception that the YCL has had a negative influence on the activities of other political party youth wings. A large number of interviewees describe individual youth wing members as “aggressive” or “violent”; some believed youth wing members were “criminals” or were recruited from criminal groups. Several interviewees expressed the opinion that youth wings were “leading young people in the wrong direction” or were “giving young people the idea that they didn’t need to work for a living.” For example, in one Tarai district it was widely held that many youths had previously been involved in criminal groups and had joined youth wings as the financial rewards were more secure. In Morang, MJF(N)-YF cadres were perceived by multiple interviewees as having “criminal connections” and were believed to be recruiting criminals to join the youth wing.

VI. YCL “Paramilitary Functioning”

In addition to observing general youth wing activities through the framework of broader rule of law commitments made in the peace process, Carter Center observers also focused specifically on Maoist compliance with the June 2008 agreement regarding the functioning of the YCL. The agreement states:

“The paramilitary functioning and activities of the CPN (Maoists)’s Young Communist League (YCL) will be completely terminated, and all public, government and private buildings and lands under its control will be vacated and returned to the respective owners within 15 days. The CPN (Maoist) has pledged to all of the political parties that YCL activities will fully comply with the laws of the land, from this time forward. A monitoring committee that includes representatives from the political parties, human rights defenders and local administration will be established in order to monitor whether this [promise] has been implemented.”³⁴

interviewed by observers did not know the term “youth wing” but, when prompted, recognized “YCL” and “UML Youth Force;” only one person had heard of “Tarun Dal.” Very few citizens could cite any youth wing activities, positive or negative.

³⁴ “Agreement between the political parties to amend the Constitution and take forward the peace process” June 25, 2008, available at: <http://www.unmin.org.np/downloads/keydocs/Agreement.to.Ammend.Constitution.2008-06-25.ENG.pdf>. It appears that the monitoring committee was never formed.

Carter Center observer findings indicate that there is no clearly agreed definition of the term “paramilitary,” making Maoist compliance difficult to evaluate. Due to the lack of an agreed-upon definition of the term “paramilitary,” there are significant discrepancies in what Maoist and non-Maoist parties believe constitutes paramilitary functioning, and statements by both sides have established subjective standards based on their separate interpretations. Non-Maoist parties tend to claim that any kind of communal living constitutes paramilitary functioning, noting the capacity of YCL cadres living communally to mobilize quickly in a manner similar to that of military forces. Maoist representatives argue that communal living is in line with the party’s ideology and is a voluntary, economical arrangement.³⁵ UCPN(M) leaders tend to define paramilitary functioning as limited to cadres living in barracks and conducting military style training with weapons. However, drawing a distinction between YCL situated in “barracks” versus those who are living in a communal manner remains a source of confusion and contention between political parties.

Moreover, there seemingly exists some level of confusion between Maoist and YCL representatives regarding whether any YCL cadres are currently situated in “paramilitary structures.” In an interview with The Carter Center in December 2010, YCL President Ganeshman Pun said that the YCL did not have any “paramilitary structures” and that any reports of YCL living in “huge numbers” were probably the result of “boasting” by excited cadres. However, on December 20 a Maoist Standing Committee meeting seemingly acknowledged the existence of YCL paramilitary structures when it announced a decision to dismantle all remaining YCL barracks throughout the country,³⁶ although at the same time senior Maoist leaders claimed there were no barracks to dismantle. On December 28, senior YCL representative Kul Prasad KC said that the Maoists’ Standing Committee decision was the “result of misunderstanding among the party leaders...there are no YCL camps to disband” and said that YCL cadres have the right to live communally.³⁷

Following the Standing Committee decision, it appeared to observers that most YCL representatives interviewed were aware of the decision, but had not received required further instructions. A YCL representative in Biratnagar said that the district committee was aware of the decision but that without receiving an official letter from the party, the decision will not be implemented in the district. Moreover, he said that discharged PLA and students are living along with the YCL in many cases and, without providing an alternative to them, the party will find it difficult to force them to leave. Additionally, in some cases, YCL representatives did not believe the party’s decision applied to them. In Chhetrapati, a YCL representative said, “this is not a camp; we are just practicing communal living as in a socialist system, which is our ultimate goal.” He added, “we sacrificed everything during the conflict. We have nothing left. We don’t have jobs so we have to live communally for our economy.” A Kaski YCL representative said that the decision was a misunderstanding on the part of the party leadership and believed that it was only taken to please other parties. And, in Gorkha, party representatives simply told observers, “there are no barracks to de-barrack.”

Carter Center Findings on Maoist Compliance

The majority of YCL sites visited by the Carter Center did not appear to be organized in a military-style hierarchy. However, observers did find one site in Kaski which was intended to serve as a “rapid response force” and where military terminology was used by a small number of interviewees to describe

³⁵ In an interview, YCL president Ganeshman Pun noted that “[YCL] commune-style living might have been misconstrued as military structure. We stay together due to our common ideology, working style and above all, we live together to become more economical.” Excerpted from “We Will Go To the Village and Live and Work With the People: YCL Chief,” Republica, January 2, 2009: http://www.myrepublica.com/~myrepub/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=783.

³⁶ “Maoists Want UNMIN After Jan 15,” The Kathmandu Post, December 21, 2010, op. cit.

³⁷ “YCL Has No Paramilitary Structure, Says In-Charge,” The Himalayan Times, December 28, 2010: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=YCL+has+no+paramilitary+structure%26sbquo;+says+in-charge&NewsID=270744>.

the organization's structure.³⁸ In Kaski, observers found one large site that is locally referred to as a "YCL camp" located on land belonging to two government entities, National Construction Company Nepal and Timber Corporation Nepal.³⁹ Observers who visited the site in January 2011 estimated that somewhere between 50 and 150⁴⁰ UCPN (M) cadres reside there permanently, including YCL cadres and members of the All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions. Although the signboard outside the camp reads that the site is a Maoist trade union office and camp for union affiliated laborers, YCL full timers also reside and work there, some of whom hold positions of authority in the camp. Maoist cadres living on site spoke candidly of the camp's purpose to provide a "rapid response force" in case of any clashes or disputes in the Pokhara area. According to a Maoist representative living on site, camp members are deployed to "rescue" party cadres when they encounter difficulties.

Several individuals interviewed in October 2010 with access to the camp told observers that the camp was organized in a hierarchical military-style structure. Although observers were unable to verify the claim,⁴¹ interviewees spoke in detail about the organization of the camp, including its division into "sections," "platoons" and "companies." After some discussion, they confirmed that the smallest unit is a section, and three of these make up a platoon. In one platoon there are about 40 cadres. They described a leadership committee which monitors the camp and enforces the rules, including meting out punishment to those who leave the camp without permission.

It remains unclear whether the camp presently maintains this structure or whether the interviewees referenced a previous structure.⁴² However, multiple individuals living on site reported that lower-ranking cadres must seek permission from a higher authority to leave the camp on personal business. According to one YCL representative, if permission is refused, a cadre can appeal to an individual of higher authority to obtain permission to leave the camp. Moreover, visitor access to the site is restricted and all outsiders, including cadres who want to join, must seek approval to enter. Observers noted that there appeared to be a large hall and extra rooms that could easily accommodate visitors or additional cadres on the site.

Higher-ranking Maoist and YCL representatives denied that the site was a paramilitary camp or had a military structure. A YCL coordinator living at the site said that there were full-time members residing on the premises but that accusations that the site was a "camp" were false and were made by those who "accuse us of being a paramilitary group and misuse the name of the YCL." The YCL Kaski district chairperson also strongly denied

³⁸ The only other district where observers heard reports similar to Kaski was in Udayapur, where it was reported that the YCL was being re-organized into a symbolic "paramilitary" structure with "platoons" and "brigades." However, local journalists and civil society members report that the YCL is not living communally or operating in a paramilitary structure (but said that Maoist activities in the district remain a source of threat).

³⁹ According to local interviewees, the YCL reportedly occupied the site after the signing of the CPA in 2006; however, observers could not verify that to be the case. It is currently rented in the name of All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions, which denies that they have YCL cadres living on site.

⁴⁰ Estimates of the number of YCL and Maoist party cadres residing at this site provided by Maoist party representatives were generally modest: a UCPN(M) district representative estimated around 5 to 7 cadres live at the site; a Maoist trade union representative estimated 20 to 25 cadres; and a YCL representative who lived at the site estimated around 40 to 45 cadres. The YCL district-in-charge and another YCL Central Committee member living on site refused to provide figures. Estimates provided by non-party interviewees were generally higher: a UML affiliated trade union representative estimated around 150 cadres; a local journalist estimated 200, while local shopkeepers working near the site estimated somewhere between 200 and 300. The highest estimate was provided by Maoist cadres who reported that up to "one thousand" or so inhabitants lived at the site; observers believe this estimate may reflect the capacity of the site, possibly reached during party programs or events when accommodating cadres from other districts. Local shopkeepers noted a reduction in numbers over the last few months.

⁴¹ Observers were unable to verify this information as other party members and site residents, including those in positions of authority, provided conflicting accounts of the camp structure.

⁴² For example, the individuals who shared this information seemed somewhat uncertain of the numbers in a platoon. UCPN-M district leaders acknowledged that the site was once a YCL camp and post-CPA had more of a military structure, but claim that it was disbanded prior to the CA elections when cadres were sent to the villages for election campaigning. It was suggested by other interviewees that during party programs, the YCL may revert to replicating a more formal command structure.

that the YCL site in Pokhara had a military structure: “I am called chairperson, not the commander. If we had military structure, I would be called commander.” He instead referred to the site as a “shelter” where some Maoist cadres stay as a means to reduce costs and live in line with the party’s ideology: “We live in different places, but in groups just to reduce the cost of living...The communists’ principle is to live in a commune. Communal living should not be related to a military structure. We do not have weapons or explosives. People live in a group in hostels of colleges. Is that also a barrack?” He dismissed suggestions that large numbers of cadres live at the site as a misunderstanding, clarifying that the shelter is used to organize major programs because it can hold – but not house – up to 2,000 cadres.

The Carter Center found several instances of YCL living communally in government buildings and many instances of YCL living communally in private buildings. Observers reported that YCL were living communally in government buildings in at least two districts since 2006, although they did not appear to be organized in a military-style hierarchy. For example, in Nawalparasi, YCL cadres, Maoist full-timers and sister wing members are living in a building owned by the Department of Roads. Between 15 and 20 cadres are said to reside permanently in the building, with the number temporarily increasing to as many as several hundred cadres when party programs are locally held. The site is used as a party “contact center” from which to conduct trainings and disseminate information. As of September 2010, there had reportedly been no efforts by the administration to remove the Maoists from the site.⁴³

There were also many cases where observers found YCL cadres living in private buildings in a communal manner but in none of these cases could it be determined that such arrangements were party-mandated or that YCL were organized in military-style formations such as brigades, platoons, or companies. Most often, the Center found these arrangements to be sanctioned, but not imposed, by the Maoists, or circumstantial given that many YCL had relocated from other districts and therefore had no home in the area. Examples include:

- In Kanchanpur, observers estimate 40 to 50⁴⁴ YCL cadres are living at a warehouse with YCL graffiti on the walls;
- In Palpa, around 15 YCL cadres live together at a site that used to house 200 to 300 YCL;
- In Parbat, at least 10 YCL cadres have been living for more than a year in an old cinema hall;
- In Kailali, YCL cadres and formally discharged PLA⁴⁵ are living communally in multiple locations;
- In Doti, YCL cadres are living communally in multiple locations, where they reportedly work in cooperative farms in exchange for room and board; in some places, three or four cadres live together while in others the number is around 10 to 12; and
- In districts such as Kailali, Khotang, Kanchanpur, Rolpa and Salyan, observers found or heard about YCL cadres living at Maoist party or YCL offices.

The Carter Center also found several examples of YCL living “communally” in and around Kathmandu. In response to local media, police, and political party focus on YCL activities in Kathmandu, in October 2010 and January 2011 Carter Center observers visited 22 sites where YCL were believed to be living in a communal manner. Of the 22 sites visited, observers found that in 8 locations (Gongabu, Sano Bharyang, Jorpati, Kapan, Bafal, Kshetrapati, Kirtipur, and Jhaukhel) YCL and other Maoist representatives were residing communally; in some locations, communal living sites also doubled as Maoist or YCL party offices.⁴⁶ It was not always possible

⁴³ Observers who visited Lamjung, Baglung and Myagdi in the past year reported that Nepal Food Corporation buildings had been occupied by the Maoists and turned into YCL camps in 2006. In Lamjung and Baglung a small number of YCL continue to reside there and the site is also used as a UCPN(M) party office. In Myagdi the land has been declared a restricted area by the CDO and was vacant as of April 2010.

⁴⁴ The estimates of residents are based on the size and internal layouts of the buildings as well as interviews with multiple sources in the district headquarters and VDCs, but could not be fully verified. This is true for all subsequent numerical estimates listed.

⁴⁵ This refers to PLA who were formally discharged from the cantonments in 2010 due to their status as verified minors or late recruits.

⁴⁶ Additionally, in one location (“Khanna Garment” in Balkumari) observers found approximately 25-30 Maoists living communally but could not verify if YCL cadres were present or not, as those on site and others claimed they were houses for trade union members and

for observers to distinguish between YCL and Maoist cadres; in some cases, it appeared that Maoist cadres as well as sister wing cadres were living in the same residences. It also appeared that all sites were located on private property, specifically homes or abandoned industrial sites, although details could not be confirmed.⁴⁷

- In Gongabu, between 10 and 15 cadres live together in a house that also serves as a party office;
- In Sano Bharyang, between 15 and 20 cadres live together and one room serves as a YCL Kathmandu district office;
- In Jorpati, around 6 or 7 YCL cadres live together. The first floor is used as a YCL office;
- In Kapan, roughly 15 people, including YCL cadres and members of the student and trade union wings, live together. A Maoist-run butcher shop operates on the first floor. According to one YCL representative, the building once housed as many as 200 cadres in the period just after the signing of the CPA and held the same number during the Maoists' May 2010 protest programs;
- In Bafal, 15 or 16 cadres are living in a house which is also a YCL party office;
- In Chhetrapati, 8 to 10 cadres are staying in a house that also serves as a YCL office. The site reportedly housed as many as 70 to 80 cadres during the Maoists' May 2010 protest programs;
- In Kirtipur, a YCL-in-charge along with his family and two YCL cadres live together. The site also serves as a YCL party office. Eight other families, none seemingly with an affiliation to the Maoists, are reportedly living on the site; and
- In Jhaukhel, a few cadres live together in a house that also functions as a cooperative farm.

Estimates of the number of cadres living at each site by local sources were often much higher than the number found and reported by Carter Center observers at a given location. For example, in Sano Bharyang, one source believed that as many as 125 cadres were living at the site but observers found only between 15 and 30 cadres. Observers found that some sites where YCL cadres were residing could accommodate many more individuals than were currently living on site, allowing for the numbers of cadres living there to temporarily increase during party events, such as during the Maoists' May 2010 protest programs. Observers also reported that most existing communal living sites were located in strategic locations, specifically nearby to main roads and transportation terminals, enabling the Maoists to "easily receive supporters who arrive from outside the valley and quickly mobilize cadres in main thoroughfares for events" according to one policeman.

Some observers also received reports of YCL communal living sites being vacated voluntarily by the Maoist party. In several locations, observers were told that communal houses occupied by YCL cadres have been vacated. In some cases, this reportedly followed directives from party leaders. In Saptari, observers were told by a Maoist representative that some YCL cadres used to live communally "in two or three places," but this was stopped a year ago as a result of central party directives. In Bhaktapur, a YCL cadre told observers that the party was instructed to abandon the practice of communal living one year ago; he said "four years ago there were about 100 cadres [living] in the YCL office, but today everyone lives in their own house." In a few of the reported sites in Kathmandu which were visited by observers but found not to be YCL communal living sites, Maoist representatives and others noted that they had once housed party cadres. For example, observers were told that multiple locations in New Baneshwor had been vacated by YCL and other party cadres.

In some parts of the country, Carter Center heard a few reports of YCL "physical defense" training, but no credible reports of YCL using firearms. Observers heard scattered reports of YCL conducting physical fitness or self-defense training; however, they did not find evidence or hear any credible reports of YCL using

other sister wings but not YCL, although some locals believed there were also YCL. The site had reportedly housed as many as 200 cadres during the May 2010 protest programs but does not any longer. In four other locations the sites visited were party offices but did not appear to be communal living areas, and the remaining nine sites visited were closed and no Maoist cadres were present.

⁴⁷ According to YCL-in-charges at the sites, Maoist cadres were not residing at any properties without the consent or, at minimum, the knowledge of the owner. In nearly all cases, Maoist representatives interviewed claimed that they paid rent to the owner, for which the party provides part or full financial support.

firearms in such training. Interviewees at the camp in Kaski told observers that cadres are expected to participate in “physical defense training,” sometimes with lathis and khukuris. However, according to the YCL camp coordinator, individual cadres are encouraged to conduct most regular physical training in the public stadium or gym outside of the camp premises, allegedly in an attempt to counter misperceptions of such training. In other districts such as Rautahat and Parbat, observers heard only a few reports of sporadic training conducted since the Maoists’ May 2010 nationwide protest programs.⁴⁸ In the majority of districts, party officials said that physical fitness training is held for YCL and other party cadres on occasion but emphasized that no military training is conducted.

Regardless of the terminology used, many government officials, non-Maoist party representatives, civil society representatives and citizens have expressed concern about the existence of YCL communal living sites. However, some citizens interviewed have also expressed positive sentiments. Those expressing concerns generally reference widely publicized incidents of violence and intimidation, often involving groups of cadres; the legacy of the conflict, especially in highly affected areas or where the presence of the state remains weak; and the fact some YCL district leaders and members are former PLA combatants. In Khotang, one interviewee said that, although the YCL is not as aggressive in the district as elsewhere, communal houses such as the one in Diktel Bazaar are psychologically intimidating to citizens. Another interviewee noted that YCL morning martial arts exercises conducted in public view was cause for some concern, especially among conflict-affected families. In Ilam, one interviewee likened the YCL to the PLA during the conflict: “The YCL create disturbances here, but this is because their party had come from ten years of insurgency. They only know how to fight and create conflict...[and] can be mobilized very quickly if there is an incident.” In Kanchanpur, civil society and police raised concerns about YCL intimidation, while citizens told observers that the YCL are able to quickly deploy large numbers of cadres because they live communally.

However, some citizens also expressed positive sentiment regarding the presence of YCL communal living sites. Several interviewees who live or operate shops near YCL-inhabited houses or sites did not feel intimidation, but instead believed the presence of YCL cadres improved the security situation or contributed positively to society. A shopkeeper near the YCL camp in Kaski said that groups of 20 to 25 YCL cadres sometimes come out of the camp and are involved in stopping alcohol and drug abuse. In Palpa, one woman said that she has felt safer since a YCL communal house was established in the area. In Kapan, two shopkeepers said that the presence of the YCL in the area deterred criminal activities such as drug abuse and that YCL cadres conducted occasional garbage removal campaigns. In Bafal, one citizen said he used to have a negative opinion of the YCL because of what he heard about their involvement in negative activities, but he now found them to be “not bad” and ready to help society if asked.

VII. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has focused on three aspects of political party youth wings: their membership, their activities, and their compliance with the peace process agreements signed by their mother parties. Overall, Carter Center observers have found that while direct violence and clashes between political party youth wings appears to have decreased, activities focused on financial gain continue – primarily involving the YCL and to a lesser extent the UML’s Youth Force. The YCL remains the largest, most organized, and most active youth wing in most areas of the country, and in some districts YCL activities are one of the most serious threats to security. Citizen fear of the YCL is compounded by infrequent but widely-publicized incidents of violence, the legacy of the conflict, the

⁴⁸ In April 2010, YCL and Maoist cadres conducted highly a publicized, nationwide physical training program. At the time, observers did not witness any military-style training, but found that most training involved lathis and appeared to be mainly a show of strength. Some of the training was characterized as paramilitary by government officials: “Nepal Army Put on High Alert,” The Himalayan Times, April 22, 2010, available at: <http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Nepali+Army+put+on+high+alert&NewsID=240575>. However, observers who visited training sites often found discrepancies between what they witnessed and national level media reports. For example, one media outlet reported that 500 Maoist cadres were being trained with firearms in Sunsari but observers who visited the same site found only 100 cadres and heard no reports of firearms being used.

common understanding that some YCL district leaders and members are former PLA combatants, and the existence of YCL communal houses.

Despite positive aspirations of youth wing members, admirable sentiments expressed in individual interviews, and a small number of constructive activities at the local level, the greatest impact of political party youth wings today appears to result from their negative activities, which can undermine political space, development, and public security. These activities include interference in contract tender processes, complicity in smuggling, solicitation of forced donations, unlawful taxation, efforts to influence appointments of users groups and management committees, and efforts towards “dispute resolution.”

Also of concern is the trend towards greater aggressiveness of youth wings, notably through the establishment of “youth forces” in the mold of the YCL. At the same time that the UML is attempting to rein in its Youth Force following numerous allegations of aggressive or illegal behavior, NC cadres are advocating for a more aggressive Tarun Dal, three Madhesi parties have formed “youth forces,” and the FLSC LV has adopted military-style rhetoric in its command structure. Though many of these “youth forces” are nascent and are “forces” in name only, the trend of youth wings as muscle is of concern for Nepal’s future. While there has been extensive focus at the national level on issues related to Maoist combatants, a broader review of political party youth wings and plans for their constructive engagement in Nepali politics and society is of equal importance.

The following recommendations are put forward in the spirit of cooperation and respect, and with the hope that they will provide useful discussion points for future action:

Political parties should issue central-level directives that encourage youth wing members to engage in community service. In many countries, youth wings are expected to design and implement projects which serve the public good. Parties should issue directives to encourage youth wings to take greater initiative in community service and civic education. Such engagement could build a more positive image for the party and its youth wing and would also give youth wing members experience and skills that would help them better serve the public in the future.

Civil society, the international community, and others should initiate programs that provide young people with opportunities to do constructive work in their communities and channel their aspirations to become successful future political leaders. The positive sentiments expressed during multiple interviews with youth wing members indicate a willingness to participate in community development efforts, as well as a desire to become future political leaders. Programs that facilitate constructive contributions to communities and/or that help develop political skills (such as communication skills, constituency building, and financial accounting) should be considered, and could provide a source of activity at a time when youth wing public activities appear to be low.

All political parties should be held fully accountable for the activities and statements of their youth wings. In order to change the culture of political party youth wings and increase accountability for their negative activities, mother parties should be held accountable for youth wing activities.

Political parties, particularly the Maoists, should refrain from using youth wings to restrict political activities and affect political outcomes. Specifically of concern are YCL actions to prevent other parties from holding public and private events, and YCL attempts to forcibly influence appointments to users groups and school committees. Such activities call into question the UCPN(M)’s commitment to multiparty democracy and have a negative impact on security and local development.

Political parties should take strong action against youth wing members found to be obtaining financial gains through illegal means, and should ensure these individuals are held accountable under the law. Specifically of concern are YCL and UML-Youth Force interference in contract tender processes and complicity

in smuggling. YCL, UML-Youth Force, FLSC LVs, TVs and other youth wings should stop soliciting forced donations and taxes from government officials, businesspersons and citizens. Such actions constitute threats to the security environment and deter public and private economic and development activities.

Political parties should desist from establishing “youth forces” or using military-style rhetoric. The trend towards youth wings as “muscle,” notably through the establishment of “youth forces” in the mold of the YCL, threatens to undermine the security environment in the long term. The establishment of youth forces and, in some cases use of military-style rhetoric, contribute to public distrust of youth wings. The attempt to reform the UML YF demonstrates the difficulties associated with disbanding such groups once they have been formed and given legitimacy by the party.

Political parties should establish a common understanding of what constitutes YCL paramilitary functioning. At present, Maoist and non-Maoist party representatives have different understandings of what constitutes paramilitary functioning, making it difficult to evaluate Maoist compliance with the terms of the June 2008 agreement to terminate YCL paramilitary functioning. It is incumbent upon political parties to reach an understanding as to what constitutes paramilitary functioning and establish an action plan with benchmarks for evaluating Maoist compliance with the terms of the agreement.

Political parties should establish a monitoring committee to assess Maoist compliance in terminating YCL paramilitary functioning. Following the establishment of an agreement on what constitutes YCL paramilitary functioning and subsequent action plan, political parties, in accordance with the June 2008 agreement, should establish a monitoring committee composed of political party representatives, human-rights defenders, and local administration to evaluate Maoist compliance.

ANNEX 1: Glossary of Key Terms

ANYA	All Nepal Youth Association, affiliated to RJM
CA	Constituent Assembly
CPN(M)	Communist Party Nepal (Maoist) - Matrika Yadav
CPN-UML	Communist Party Nepal - Unified Marxist Leninist
DAO	District Administration Office
FDNF	Federal Democratic National Forum
FDNF-affiliated FLSC	FDNF-affiliated Federal Limbuwan State Council led by Kumar Lingden
FDNP	Federal Democratic National Party
FLSC	Federal Limbuwan State Council
FLSC-Misekhang	Federal Limbuwan State Council- Misekhang
FLSC-Sanjuhang	Federal Limbuwan State Council- Sanjuhang
ILO 169	International Labor Organization Convention 169, Indigenous Tribal and Peoples Convention 1989
KV	Khumbuwan Volunteers
LV	Limbuwan Volunteers
MJF	Madeshi Janadikhar [People's Rights] Forum
MJF(D)-YF	Madeshi Janadikhar [People's Rights] Forum (Democratic) - Youth Forum
MJF(N)-YF	Madeshi Janadikhar [People's Rights] Forum (Nepal) - Youth Forum and Youth Force
NC	Nepali Congress
NDYO	National Democratic Youth Organization, affiliated to RPP-N
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RJM	Rastriya Janamorcha [National People's Front]
RPP	Rastriya Prajatantra Party [National Democratic Party]
TASC	Tharuhat Autonomous State Council
TMDP-YF	Tarai Madesh Democratic Party - Youth Front and Youth Force
TV	Tharu Volunteers
UCPN(M)	Unified Communist Party Nepal (Maoist)
CPN-UML YF	Youth Force, affiliated to the CPN-UML
CPN-UML YFN	Youth Federation Nepal, affiliated to the CPN-UML
VDC	Village Development Committee
YCL	Young Communist League, affiliated to UCPN(M)

ANNEX 2: Overview of Political Party and Identity Group Youth Wings by Organization

1. UCPN(M) Young Communist League (YCL)

Political Party Affiliation:

Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN(M))

Self-Reported Membership:

The Young Communist League (YCL) appears to be the largest youth wing in terms of membership. YCL President Ganeshman Pun estimated that the total membership of the YCL was “approximately 1,000,000 cadres.”⁴⁹ Unverified estimates offered by UCPN(M) and YCL district-level representatives regarding general membership ranged up to 10,000 or more in relatively populous districts in which the Maoists are quite active, such as Kailali and Kaski. Some general members in each district are active members who can be mobilized quickly by the party, and are often referred to as “whole-timers” or “full-timers.” Estimates of active members provided by UCPN(M) and YCL district-level representatives ranged from around 100 to 1,500; in more sparsely populated districts and in districts not considered to be party strongholds, the number of active members was fewer than 100.

Organizational Structure:

The YCL appears generally to have the most clear and well-respected organizational structure. The YCL organizational structure mirrors that of the UCPN(M). Directives flow from the YCL central level down through several committee layers: zonal (per the Maoist-proposed autonomous states), district, constituency, area, VDC and ward. YCL activities are also directed by UCPN(M) leadership and coordinated with the youth wing at a peer level, i.e., district-level UCPN(M) leadership coordinates with district-level YCL leadership. Coordination between the party and the youth wing is generally strong: YCL districts-in-charge are also members of the party district committees, and the YCL and the Maoist party at the local level frequently share offices.

2. CPN-UML Youth Federation Nepal & Youth Force

Political Party Affiliation:

Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML)

Self-Reported Membership:

The CPN-UML Youth Federation Nepal, together with its sub-unit the CPN-UML Youth Force, appears to be the second largest youth wing at the local level in terms of membership. The unverified estimated membership of the UML youth wing offered by the party was 500,000. District estimates ranged up to highs of 5,000 general members in Kaski and 7,000 in Kailali, but most district-level estimates were between 500 and 2,000.

Organizational Structure:

The YFN organizational structure mirrors that of the CPN-UML mother party with a clear chain of command; directives flow from the YFN central level down through several committee layers: regional, zonal, district, area, constituency, and VDC. CPN-UML and YFN appear to coordinate closely on activities conducted at the local level.

Other Notes:

The Youth Force was created in mid 2008 following the CA election in order to counter YCL activities. According to the CPN-UML public information department, all activities of the Youth Force were then suspended in December 2008 due to concerns about negative activities. This suspension was poorly enforced,

⁴⁹ All membership estimates throughout this annex are unverified by The Carter Center. The numbers listed are estimates given by youth wing leaders and as such are likely to be inflated in many cases.

however, and in December 2009 the YF was brought under the direct control of the party and merged into the main UML youth wing, newly renamed the Youth Federation Nepal (YFN). However, despite these central-level decisions, Carter Center observers consistently found that UML party members, youth wing cadres and the general public did not have a clear understanding of the Youth Force's status and continued to refer to Youth Force activities in many districts. In general, interviewees tended to attribute constructive activities to the YFN and negative activities to the YF.

3. Nepali Congress Tarun Dal

Political Party Affiliation:

Nepali Congress

Self-Reported Membership:

The Tarun Dal is smaller and much less active than the YCL and UML YFN. Tarun Dal central leadership estimated that its youth wing has around 120,000 members. Unverified district membership figures provided by NC representatives were generally modest, on average ranging from the low hundreds, in districts such as Rautahat and Kanchanpur, to up to a few thousand or more in districts such as Banke and Parbat. At the central level, Tarun Dal leadership told the Carter Center that the youth wing does not have a strong presence at the VDC level, and observers noted that in many districts, such as Dolakha, Mahottari, and Salyan, the Tarun Dal appeared to have little to no presence beyond the district headquarters.

Organizational Structure:

The Tarun Dal has multiple membership levels. New recruits must perform six months of service to the party before obtaining full membership; following two years of good service, the Tarun Dal district committee is responsible for recommending "active" membership for full members. The Tarun Dal command structure has fewer layers than the YCL or UML YF, with orders flowing from central level down through district, VDC and ward committees.

Other Notes:

The Tarun Dal is reportedly the country's oldest youth wing. Membership requirements and internal promotion criteria were revised during the NC general convention in September 2010. Party members voted to reduce the minimum length of service required for eligibility for promotion into a senior position of either the Tarun Dal or the main NC party. (The requirement was reduced from four years to two). This decision pleased district-level Tarun Dal cadres interviewed, who viewed the move as an effort to elevate the role of youth in the party.

4. MJF-Nepal Youth Forum and Youth Force

Political Party Affiliation:

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal (Upendra Yadav) (MJF(N))

Self-Reported Membership:

Unverified estimated membership figures provided by the MJF(N) Youth Forum varied considerably by district, ranging from several hundred in Rautahat to over 10,000 in Morang and Sarlahi. The discrepancy in these figures may reflect the varying levels of support the MJF(N) enjoys in different Tarai districts vis-à-vis other Madhesi parties, although it appears unlikely that the higher numbers are credible.

Organizational Structure:

The command structure of the MJF(N)-YF is similar to that of the YCL and UML YF, with central, district, constituency and ward committees all dependent upon central-level directives.

Other Notes:

In addition to its MJF(N)-YF, the party established a MJF(N) “Tarun Dasta” (Youth Force) in Bara in April 2010.⁵⁰ MJF(N) Youth Force membership figures are reportedly low, with a few hundred members at most in any one district. Physical fitness is reportedly the key criteria for joining the MJF(N) Youth Force. The division of labor between the MJF(N)-YF and MJF(N) Youth Force appears to be as follows: MJF(N)-YF is responsible for social work and development programs while the Youth Force is responsible for providing defense and security to party cadres. MJF(N) representatives said that the Youth Force has been formed in Bara and Sarlahi and that plans were afoot to establish wings in Rautahat and Morang. MJF(N) Youth Force cadres have reportedly been provided physical and basic defense trainings, with lathis and khukuris, and have been deployed to protect party members at rallies.

5. MJF-Democratic Youth Forum

Political Party Affiliation:

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Democratic (Bijay Gachhadar) (MJF(D))

Self-Reported Membership:

The MJF(D) Youth Forum (MJF(D)-YF) is reportedly smaller than its MJF(N) counterpart. Following the MJF split in 2009, the MJF(D) had to establish its youth wing anew as observers were told that many youth were retained by the MJF(N) in Central Tarai districts. An MJF(D)-YF representative in Banke estimated that the group had approximately 200-250 members; figures provided in Central Tarai districts were similar, with no more than a few hundred estimated members in Rautahat and Sarlahi. In Nawalparasi, an MJF(D) representative said that its youth wing was “very large” but did not provide a figure.

Organizational Structure:

The command structure of the MJF(D)-YF is similar to that of other youth wings, with district and ward-level committees subordinate to central-level directives.

6. TMDP Youth Front and Youth Force

Political Party Affiliation:

Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMDP)⁵¹

Self-Reported Membership:

TMDP appears to have a small youth wing, the TMDP Youth Front (TMDP-YF), with uneven presence in the Central Tarai. Estimated membership figures were highest in Rautahat, where TMDP representatives claimed to have several hundred members; TMDP-YF representatives from Nawalparasi and Sarlahi did not provide membership estimates.

Organizational Structure:

The TMDP-YF command structure is similar to that of MJF(N) and MJF(D) youth wings with central, district, VDC, area and ward committees subordinate to central leadership.

Other Notes:

Other than in Sarlahi, the home district of TMDP leader Mahantha Thakur, TMDP-YF did not appear to have a significant presence beyond the district level; a Rautahat TMDP-YF representative told observers that the

⁵⁰ See ‘MJF to form defence squad,’ ekantipur.com, May 22, 2010, <http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/05/13/headlines/MJF-to-form-defence-squad/314252/>.

⁵¹ The research on which this section is based was conducted prior to the TMDP’s formal split in December 2010. See “TMDP Splits, Yadav heads TMDP-Nepal,” Republica, December 31, 2010, http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=26657.

TMDP-YF was still a nascent group and was developing its organizational capacity. Like MJF(N), it seems that TMDP may be in the process of establishing a Youth Force to provide security for the party. A Sarlahi TMDP-YF representative told observers that it hoped to recruit 300 members (drafting two to four members from each of 100 VDCs and municipalities) to establish its Youth Force by the end of 2010. Plans to form a Youth Force were not mentioned by TMDP representatives in other districts.

7. Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Youth People's Security Force

Political Party Affiliation:

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (Matrika Yadav) (CPN(M))

Self-Reported Membership:

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) led by Matrika Yadav (CPN(M)) Youth People's Security Force (YPSF) is a relatively small youth wing with limited presence in Tarai districts. CPN(M) representatives in Mahottari estimated having a district membership of approximately 350 cadres.

8. Rastriya Prajatantra Party National Democratic Youth Organization

Political Party Affiliation:

Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP)

Self-Reported Membership:

The National Democratic Youth Organization (NDYO) appears to be nascent and relatively small; an estimate of 150 district members was provided by RPP members in Dolakha, and elsewhere observers were unable to obtain membership estimates. The RPP NDYO does not appear to be very publicly active and, in two districts – Dolakha and Jajarkot – party representatives told observers that the youth wing was not currently conducting activities.

9. Rastriya Janamorcha All Nepal Youth Association

Political Party Affiliation:

Rastriya Janamorcha (RJM)

Self-Reported Membership:

The All Nepal Youth Association (ANYA) does not appear to be publicly active, and observers were unable to obtain an estimate of its membership.

Organizational Structure:

RJM ANYA has a central committee which provides directives to district committees.

10. Federal Limbuwan State Council Limbuwan Volunteers

Political Party Affiliation:

Federal Democratic National Front (FDNF) and non-political party groups

Self-Reported Membership:

The three factions of the Federal Limbuwan State Council (FLSC), led by Kumar Lingden, Sanjuhang Palungwa, and Misekhang Thamsuhang respectively, each maintain a youth wing known as the Limbuwan Volunteers (LV). The FDNF-affiliated FLSC faction led by Kumar Lingden appears to have the largest LV youth wing, with an unverified estimate of 17,000 cadres spread throughout the nine proposed Limbuwan districts east of the Arun River in the Eastern Region. The Sanjuhang-led FLSC faction appears to have the

second-largest LV wing with an unverified estimate of around 14,000 cadres across the proposed Limbuwan state. The Misekhang-led FLSC faction has the smallest wing of the three, but still boasted an estimated membership in the thousands.

Organizational Structure:

FLSC LV representatives from all three factions spoke about their command structures in military terms. A Jhapa FLSC-Misekhang representative described the hierarchy of each LV faction as follows: a central commander responsible for all nine Limbuwan districts; sub-commanders responsible for two or three districts; and district-level commanders responsible for overseeing various sub-district committees.

Multiple LV representatives drew comparisons between the LV command structure and that of the Maoists' PLA. An FDNF-affiliated FLSC LV representative in Ilam told observers that before becoming a member of its "regular" LV force (which he called a "liberation army" similar to the PLA that can be mobilized quickly) a cadre must first serve in the PLA-modeled LV field-civil command. Another Ilam LV cadre told observers that LVs live communally in two houses where 50 or 60 members stay together to be available "if needed."

Other Notes:

A non-party-affiliated interviewee in Jhapa referred to LVs as a kind of "rapid response" force that can be mobilized "within an hour" if necessary. An FLSC-Sanjuhang Jhapa LV representative told observers that the majority of LVs are part of the "Limbuwan Militia," in which service is a prerequisite for becoming a full LV member; he said the group sees itself as a future Limbuwan "security force" but stressed that cadre trainings are "non-violent" and are geared towards ensuring "peace and security."

11. Tharuhat Autonomous State Council Federal Volunteers (also called "Tharu Volunteers")

Political Party Affiliation:

Federal Democratic National Party (FDNP) led by Laxman Tharu. Additionally, though not a political party, the Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC), also shares oversight of the Tharu Volunteers (TV).

Self-Reported Membership:

Although a comprehensive estimate could not be obtained regarding present membership, it is not believed to be significantly more than the estimated 500 cadres which made up the Tharuhat Army at the time of its formation. In a recent visit to Kanchanpur, which has a significant Tharu population, a TV representative estimated that there were more than 200 district members. Observers found that most TV members were not full-time cadres but rather were individuals who donated their free time to assisting TASC and FDNP.

Organizational Structure:

The TV, a reconstituted iteration of the Tharuhat Army⁵² formed in August 2009, is one of 13 identity group youth wings that comprise the Federal Volunteers under FDNP. TASC and FDNP reportedly share custody of the Tharu youth wing and deploy cadres to support the activities of both groups. TASC provides directives for TV cadres per locally-driven TASC programs while FDNP provides directives to mobilize cadres for centrally-driven FDNP programs. In Kailali, an ex-PLA member and former Limbuwan Volunteer commander coordinates with TASC on TV cadre activities on behalf of FDNP. TV reportedly coordinates with other FNDP-affiliated youth wings through occasional central level meetings. Volunteers are responsible for providing security to FDNP leaders when they visit the district. In Kanchanpur, TV cadres recently received direction from TASC to focus on expanding the base at the constituency level; they are working to form a committee in each constituency in Kanchanpur at the moment as part of expansion plans for the organization.

⁵²A Tharu Volunteer cadre interviewed by observers said "one reason we changed the name of the organization was to reduce the negative perceptions of the Tharuhat Army."

Other Notes:

TV is well-networked in some areas through Chaudhary Youth Clubs,⁵³ and see this as a strength that allows them to mobilize a large number of young people for programs or to put pressure on the government as necessary. This is what enabled them to mobilize a large number of people in Kanchanpur during the 2009 Tharu movement.

12. Chhetri Samaj Youth Front

Political Party Affiliation:

None

Self-Reported Membership:

The Chhetri Samaj Youth Front appears to be focused on building the organizational capacity of the group; the Kaski-based youth wing estimates that it has a few thousand members, all of whom are also full members of the mother organization.

Other Notes:

The Chhetri Samaj Youth Front president told observers that the main responsibility of the Youth Front was “to widen the support base of the Chhetri Samaj and establish new chapters at the VDC and ward-level.” He further noted that the youth wing is responsible for holding public interaction programs to educate people on the dangers of ethnic-based federalism and that he has been going door-to-door to raise awareness on the issue: “In the last 2 months, I have been across Kaski, last week I was in Dang, and before that I was in Rolpa to hold interaction programs on why ethnic-federalism will be bad for the country and how it will lead to war and chaos. We hold these programs not just with Chhetris but with all castes and different ethnic groups.”

13. Brahmin Samaj Youth Front

Political Party Affiliation:

None

Self Reported Membership:

The Brahmin Samaj Youth Front, like the Chhetri Samaj, appears to be focused on building organizational capacity. In Kaski, the estimate provided by a Brahmin Samaj Youth Front representative was around 4,000 members. The organization’s general secretary told observers that the organization is trying to expand its presence to all VDCs in the district and has been organizing cultural programs to raise awareness.

Other Notes:

A leader of the Brahmin Samaj youth wing noted that there was a possibility that the youth wing "would go underground" if legal means to advance its agenda were unsuccessful.

14. Khumbuwan National Front Khumbuwan Volunteers

Political Party Affiliation:

None

Self-Reported Membership:

The Khumbuwan National Front (KNF) Khumbuwan Volunteers (KV) was found to exist in Khotang, where a KNF representative told observers that there were 6,500 KV district level cadres and as many as 45,000

⁵³ Chaudhary Youth Clubs are long-standing cooperatives active in many Tharu villages. They provide credit and savings opportunities, as well as engage youth in social activities such as street cleaning.

members in the seven districts west of the Arun River in the Eastern Region; observers were unable to verify the accuracy of this figure but, based on regional population data, believe it to be highly inflated.

Other Notes:

The KNF representative interviewed claimed that the main activity of KVs at present was physical training. He elaborated that KVs may take up an armed struggle if the new constitution does not guarantee a Khumbuwan state. Other interviewees were not aware of activities conducted by KVs beyond expanding the youth wing's organization structure.

15. Tamu Dhi Gurung Youth Forum

Political Party Affiliation:

None

Self-Reported Membership:

The Tamu Dhi chairman in Kaski told observers that the group's membership was more than 10,000 and that Gurung Youth Forum chapter leaders are instructed to form new chapters in their respective localities. According to the Youth Forum's chairperson, "Tamu Dhi's youth wing is made up of Gurung youth who are sometimes also in political party youth wings. Fifty percent of our youth wing is made of party youth wing members – YCL, Youth Front, and Tarun Dal. The other 50% are neutral."

Other Notes:

The Tamu Dhi Gurung Youth Forum appears to be inactive currently. While the youth wing has no activities at present, the Tamu Dhi chairman said that it was planning programs to push for a Tamuwan state in the coming months.