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## Preface

The International Labour Organization, working through the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), has turned the progressive prevention and abolition of children's work into a universal cause.

At the global level, children's work is a broad, complex and multi-faceted issue. In the absence of reliable information and qualitative and quantitative studies, however, it is difficult to find effective ways to address the problem. For many years, a lack of data regarding the causes, magnitude, nature and consequences of children's work has significantly impeded efforts to effectively face, halt and eliminate the problem, which affects millions of boys and girls around the world.

Since 1998, the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour has administered the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC). The purpose of the Programme is to assist participating countries collect data on children's work for comparison among themselves. The overall objective of SIMPOC is to use household surveys to generate quantitative data on school activities, as well as other economic and non-economic activities in which children are engaged outside of school. The programme also aims to collect qualitative information and create databases on children's work. The information gathered by SIMPOC has served as the basis for a number of studies in participating countries.

The collection and analysis of reliable data supports the development of effective actions against children's work. It is hoped that the information gathered in different countries, and the studies based on that information, will facilitate the development, implementation and follow-up of policies and programmes to combat children's work. It should also promote social attitudes that favour the sustainable prevention and progressive elimination of children's work.

I am certain that the information presented in this report on children's work in Nicaragua will contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon, increase sensitivity to the plight of working boys and girls, and make it possible to develop better strategies to fight the problem.

The ability of each participating country to form an increasingly accurate picture of children's work undoubtedly points toward the development of a more effective process and a shorter path toward a world without child labour.

Guillermo Dema  
Subregional Coordinator  
ILO/IPEC for Central America,  
Panama, The Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico

## Foreword

For Nicaragua, and surely for the rest of the world as well, the availability of objective and consistent data on children's work is a significant step toward the fulfilment of ILO conventions 138 and 182, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The historic inclusion of a Child Labour Module in the 2000 Household Survey signals the beginning of a new phase in the prevention and elimination of children's work. It will make it possible to draw an increasingly accurate picture of the problem in its current state, and this will undoubtedly facilitate the achievement of "a future without child labour".

The purpose of this report is to provide the country with clear and precise information on the chief characteristics of child and adolescent work in Nicaragua, highlighting ideas and issues that may encourage debate, analysis and even controversy, both within the National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of the Adolescent Worker (CNEPTI), and in society at large. The goal is to generate more effective actions through the convergence of reality, science and human will, thereby ensuring respect for the rights of Nicaraguan boys and girls.

The report also includes criteria which can be used to assess the progress made thus far in preventing and eliminating children's work. These criteria are set forth in the belief that they will contribute to the quest for sustainable human, social and economic development.

Another goal of the report is to describe actions inspired by a variety of different approaches, in order to identify and rally around points on which everyone agrees, while respecting differences.

In my capacity as Minister of Labour and Executive Chairman of the National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of the Adolescent Worker, I wish to express my thanks to all of the actors who participated in this important effort. These include the International Labour Organization (ILO), which has provided significant technical and financial support through the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), and its offices in Geneva, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Its efforts have been focused on bridging the information gaps that have stood in the way of swift and effective action to achieve "a world without child labour". The work of ILO has provided us with a database that contains quantitative and qualitative information, as well as studies that objectively describe the situation of working boys and girls.

I would also like to thank UNICEF and the Central Bank of Nicaragua for their timely technical and financial support, and the members of CNEPTI – particularly the National Household Survey Subcommittee – for their important contributions.

The technical staff of the General Directorate of Employment and Wages of the Ministry of Labour deserves special recognition. Like the survey workers and consultants involved in this project, they have displayed a high level of professionalism, providing us with high-quality documents on children's work. The technical staff strove to carry its analyses beyond simple interpretation of data, in order to reveal the implications the survey results hold for the country.

Other entities deserving of mention include the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), the Ministry of Health (MINSAs), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD), UNDP and all of those organizations which, through their writings, provided valuable insights that helped us to design a more thorough and useful analysis.

Very special thanks are due to the people who provided the information – especially the surveyed boys and girls and their families.

Thanks should also be extended to the government of the United States, for channelling financial support through ILO for this initiative of national importance.

Both this effort and those to come are dedicated to the entire country, and especially to its working boys and girls. They deserve our full support in their efforts to transform their reality in search of a better quality of life.

Virgilio Gurdían  
Minister of Labour and Chairman of the National Commission  
for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour (CNEPTI)

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## Acronyms

- 
- **CNEPTI:** National Commission for the Gradual Eradication of Child Labour and Working Adolescent Protection
- **ECERP:** Strategy for Economic Growth and Reduction of Poverty
- **ECLAC:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- **EMNV:** Household Survey to Measure the Quality of Life
- **ENDESA:** National Survey of Demography and Health
- **ENTIA:** National Survey on Child Labour
- **FOB:** Free on Board
- **INATEC:** National Technical Institute
- **INEC:** National Institute of Statistics and Census
- **IPEC:** International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
- **MECD:** Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports
- **MITRAB:** Ministry of Labour
- **NBI:** Unmet Basic Needs
- **OIT:** International Labour Office
- **NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisations
- **EAP:** Economically Active Population
- **GNP:** Gross National Product
- **PREAL:** Program for the Promotion of Educational Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean
- **UNDP:** United Nations Development Program
- **RAAN:** Autonomous North Atlantic Region
- **RAAS:** Autonomous South Atlantic Region
- **UNESCO:** United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This in-depth analysis of the situation of working children in Nicaragua focuses on those girls and boys who had been working during the week preceding the ENTIA 2000 survey (National Survey on Child and Adolescent Labour), as well as the characteristics of their households and general living conditions. As such, the analysis takes into account the fundamental features of said population in order to channel more effective measures for dealing with this phenomenon and to have reliable data about the causes of child labour and its accompanying factors. A significant effort has been made in this report, moreover, to compare households with children who work and those having youngsters who do not.

### Main characteristics of working children

The ENTIA 2000 survey reveals that out of the 314,012 children between 5 and 17 years old who stated that they had worked at some point in their lives, 253,057 were still working during the week preceding the survey, that is, they were actual workers, representing 14.3% of all boys and girls in this age group. Of these, 187,523 (74.0%) were males, as opposed to 65,534 (26.0%) females

According to the ENTIA 2000 survey results, working children were present in every province, primarily concentrated in the Autonomous North Atlantic Region (RAAN), Madriz, Jinotega, the Autonomous South Atlantic Region (RAAS) and Nueva Segovia.

The largest percentage of working children belonged to rural areas, mainly the Autonomous South Atlantic Region (RAAS), Chinandega, and the Autonomous North Atlantic Region (RAAN), where over a quarter of all children between 5 and 17 years old were working. Other provinces with high

work rates for children were Leon, Madriz, Boaco, Nueva Segovia, Esteli, Matagalpa, and Jinotega.

As for urban working children, a high percentage was found in Nueva Segovia, Rivas, RAAN, Esteli and Jinotega, as well as Managua, the capital city.

With respect to educational levels, the survey results revealed data that should be of major concern for the country in general: 52.2% of working children did not attend school. Of those that did manage to, 23.4% had not completed any level of schooling, 62.4% had at most been to primary school, and 14.1% had attended some high school

Regarding industry, it was noticed that the major sectors in which they were involved are agriculture, forestry, and fishing, whereas 20.4% were working in trade.

Regarding occupations, unskilled labourers represent 64.9% of all working children.

With regards to what they earned for their work, out of the 253,057 working children, only 101,536 (40.0%) reported receiving an income for their work. The rest worked as unpaid assistants or received retribution in kind.

Although girls had higher schooling levels, their earnings were lower. The lowest wages were found in community, social, and personal services and in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Additionally, girls dominate the services sector.

### Characteristics of households with working children

Most households with working children were in Matagalpa, Chinandega, Leon,

Jinotega, and the Autonomous North and South Atlantic Regions (RAAN and RAAS).

Regarding area of residence, the majority of households with working children were in rural areas (62.2%). In stark contrast, the majority of households with non-working children were in urban areas (64.0%).

The provinces with the highest number of working boys and girls in rural areas were RAAS, Madriz, Rio San Juan, Jinotega, la RAAN, Boaco, Matagalpa y Rivas.

In both types of households (with and without working children), close to 30% of the heads were women. A fundamental difference is found between urban and rural areas, given that in the former the percentage of female-headed households is higher.

Schooling levels for heads of working children's households were lower than those in the case of non-working children. In fact, 41.5% of the former had no level of schooling, as opposed to only 22.8% of the latter. Only 10.0% of those heads of working children's households had attended some high school, and 1.7% had gone to university. In contrast, out of those without working children in the household, a total of 25.4% had gone to high school, and 9.5% had attended university.

A higher level of unemployment was found among heads of households without child workers (20.0%) as opposed to those with working children (14.0%), which indicates and again confirms that beyond poverty, there are psychological and social factors that promote child labour. Similarly, higher income was reported in households of non-working children. Moreover, the disadvantaged position of heads of working children's households with respect to their own job placement was confirmed. For example, 18.7% of these were unskilled labourers, in contrast with only 12.1% of the heads of

households in which children did not work. Furthermore, of these, 12.7% were employed as administrators, technicians, top level technicians, and professionals. However, among heads of working children's households, a scant 3.6% held similar positions.

### Living conditions of working children

In general, it was found that the living conditions of both groups --- those households having working boys and girls and those that did not --- were quite far from being optimal for the children's development. Nevertheless, in working children's households, the disadvantages were greater:

- A total of 18.5% of the dwellings of working children were shacks or hut-like structures, as opposed to only 10.0% of those in which the children did not work.
- It is estimated that 6.4% of working children's dwellings were improvised (made with plastic sheeting, wood scraps, cardboard, corrugated tin, etc.), in contrast with 4.0% of dwellings of non-working children.
- Approximately 9.7% of working children inhabited dwellings with no flush toilet or latrine, whereas only 4.3% of those dwellings in which the children did not work lacked these facilities.
- Just 11.6% of dwellings of working children had indoor sanitary facilities, as opposed to 26.3% of dwellings in which the children did not work.
- Similarly, only 24.2% of dwellings of working children had potable water, as opposed to 41.1% of dwellings of non-working children.
- In 39.1% of working children's dwellings, there was no electric power, in contrast with only 19.2% for the other group.
- A total of 50.7% of dwellings with non-working children used firewood for

cooking, as opposed to 76.8% of dwellings of children who worked.

- For only 26.4% of working children's households was income derived from stable employment, in contrast with 45.8% of households with non-working children.

- In addition to regular employment, 3.5% of households without working children had other income sources, which only occurred in 1.4% of the group with children who worked.

Comparing expenditure levels for both types of households, the most relevant difference is that on education. The average school-related expenditure of households with working children was C\$122.71 (less than US\$10), whereas said

expenditure was double in households of children who did not work.

Figures from the survey also reveal that, despite their lower income, working children's households had, on average, more members than those in the other group, the main difference being in the number of children under 18 years of age.

The analysis showed the clear disadvantage of work in every aspect of the lives of the young victims and their entire families. It is difficult to ascertain which situations are causes and which merely effects. However, it is urgent that the prevention and eradication of this phenomenon be faced with the greatest energy and commitment possible.

# 1. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

## 1.1 Introduction

For this in-depth study of working girls and boys in Nicaragua, it is necessary to begin with a description of the country's demographic profile, including the structure, growth, and geographic distribution of the populace, as well as educational aspects, especially illiteracy, access to schooling, dropout rates, and public expenditure on education. With respect to economic features, economic growth, income distribution, job access and poverty levels have to be considered, along with the living conditions of Nicaraguan families, in particular those conditions related to dwelling and access to services, and characteristics of the heads of household.

## 1.2 What is Nicaragua's populace like?

The Nicaraguan population has grown fivefold<sup>1</sup> in the last 50 years, from 1,049,611 inhabitants in 1950 to 5,205,023 in the year 2001. The country has a total surface area of 130,374 Km<sup>2</sup> with a population density of 39.9 inhabitants per Km<sup>2</sup> in 2001, the lowest in Central America. The estimated annual average population growth rate for the period of 2000 – 2005 is 2.6%. A total of 42.5% of the populace resides in rural areas. Distribution by sex is almost equal between men and women.

According to the Living Standard Measurement Study 2001 (EMNV), the geographic distribution of the population by region is quite diverse, as seen in the following table:

**Table #1.1**  
Percent distribution of the population by area of residence, by region, 1993 and 2001

Region	1993		2001	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Managua	80.3	19.7	91.5	8.5
Pacific <sup>2</sup>	58.2	41.8	54.8	45.2
Central <sup>3</sup>	32.7	67.3	40.6	59.4
Atlantic <sup>4</sup>	37.0	63.0	45.6	54.4

Source: EMNV 2001, INEC.

In Managua, site of the nation's capital, the proportion of the population that is urban increased by 11 percentage points between 1993 and 2001, from 80.3% to 91.5%. This is due in part to rural residents migrating to the capital and other urban centres in search of jobs and a better standard of living. The same situation was observed in the Central and Atlantic regions, but to a lesser extent.

Nicaragua's population is young, with 2,692,541 inhabitants under 18 years of age in the year 2001, slightly more than half (51.7%) of the total populace. This is the group which requires the greatest investment from the state and society as a whole in the form of basic and fundamental services such as food, schooling, health, safety, and recreation. These elements are necessary in order to fully be able to exercise their rights and optimise their capacities, and thus be able to live a full, rewarding life and, once they become adults, contribute to the nation's development.

From this young population, according to the ENDESA 2001<sup>5</sup> survey, 10.6% of

<sup>2</sup> The Pacific region includes the provinces of Masaya, Granada, Carazo, Rivas, Leon, and Chinandega.

<sup>3</sup> The Central region includes Matagalpa, Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Boaco, and Chontales.

<sup>4</sup> The Atlantic or Caribbean region includes the Autonomous Regions of the North and South Atlantic and Rio San Juan.

<sup>5</sup> Nicaraguan Survey of Demography and Health of the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Nicaragua.

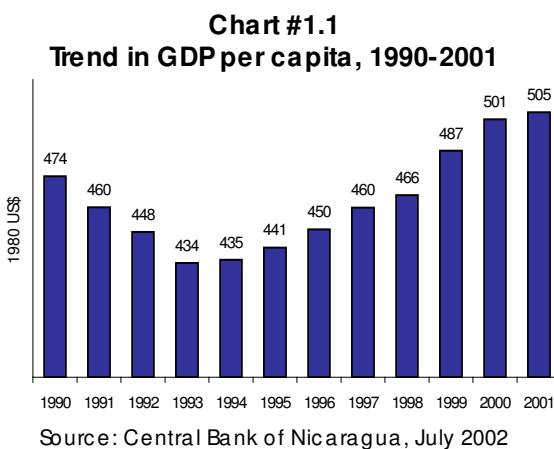
<sup>1</sup> Official data from INEC. Nicaraguan Demography and Health Survey (ENDESA) 2001. October 2002.

adolescent females between the ages of 15 and 17 are already mothers, and 4.0% were pregnant with their first child at the moment that the survey was being carried out. In short, nearly 15.0% of them are dealing with motherhood at a time of their lives when they should be studying, developing their own personalities, and having fun. By the same token, they are contributing to Nicaragua's high birth rate.

### 1.3 What is Nicaragua's economic and development status?

Many years of social and political instability, of inadequate development policies, and natural disasters that have devastated large economic sectors of its territory, have rendered Nicaragua's current economic situation as one of difficulty and hardship. All of these disadvantages have made its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita the region's lowest.

In recent years, notable efforts have been made toward economic integration, both with the region and with the rest of the world, but Nicaragua's position is still precarious, despite a slight positive growth trend of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita since 1994, as can be noted in the graph below:



The nation's economic vulnerability can be observed in its elevated domestic

and foreign debt, the deficits in the trade account and the balance of payments, its scant diversification of exports and low export volume, the dependency on imported technology and goods, and its weak infrastructure in the areas of communications, energy, and transportation. The trade deficit alone (this being the difference between FOB exports and FOB imports) has reached a thousand million dollars. The country's annual debt per capita is US\$1,224.60. On the other hand, at current retail prices, the average workers' wage covers only the cost of one and a half basic shopping baskets.

Nicaraguan family income reveals large gaps in terms of equality in distribution. According to the Human Development in Nicaragua report, which was made public in 2002<sup>6</sup>, the poorest decile of the population— comprising some 520,000 inhabitants, had access to only 1.3% of the total income generated in the country in 2001. In vivid contrast, the top decile, being that of the richest 10% of the populace and comprising the same number of inhabitants, appropriated 46.1% of the nation's total wealth. Of this sector, the wealthiest 1% alone garnered 18.4% of all income, which is equivalent to more than what the first five deciles (half the population, some 2.6 million inhabitants) were able to earn. Together, the five poorest groups only received 15.4% of the total income generated in Nicaragua.

If we compare 1998 with 2001, a minimal increase in the percentage of total income received is noted among the first three deciles of the population, which does not represent significant changes in their quality of life. However, a slight drop in the earnings of the fifth through ninth groups can be seen, in other words, among the middle class. The earnings of the top decile alone, the richest sector, grew from 45.4% to 46.1%

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, 2002.

of total national income, that is, the wealthiest members of the populace increased their percentage share of total income.

**Table #1.2**  
**Income distribution, 1998 and 2001**

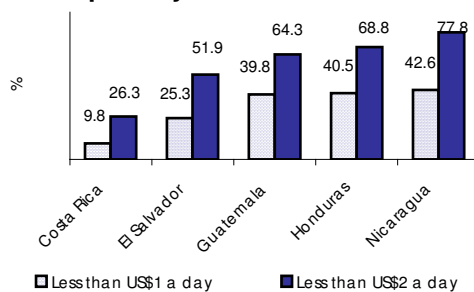
Decile	Proportion of national income received by each decile	
	1998	2001
First	1.0	1.3
Second	2.0	2.3
Third	2.9	3.1
Fourth	3.9	3.9
Fifth	5.0	4.8
Sixth	6.3	6.0
Seventh	7.9	7.7
Eighth	10.6	10.2
Ninth	15.1	14.6
Tenth	45.4	46.1
Wealthiest 1%	16.0	18.4

Source: EMNV 1998 and 2001, INEC.

All the above-mentioned factors, in addition to an unjust distribution of wealth, have been decisive in reducing the vast majority of Nicaraguans to high levels of impoverishment, which in turn yields fertile ground for permanent and even increased child labour.

When analysing poverty levels in the Central American region, we note that Nicaragua has the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty according to figures supplied by the World Bank.

**Chart #1.2**  
**Central America: Population below poverty threshold levels**



Source: ENMV 2001/ World Bank (World Development Report 2000-2001).

Data provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) based on

the EMNV of 1993 and 2001 show that poverty in Nicaragua diminished slightly, but that the number of persons below the poverty line rose due to population growth, rising from 2,099,954 in 1993 to 2,383,901 in the year 2001.

As for people under the extreme poverty line, although there was a minor drop in this population since 1993, the situation is not more encouraging given that in 2001 there were still 785,958 Nicaraguans in this precarious condition

In general, both poverty and extreme poverty harm more people in the rural rather than the urban areas of the country. There are close to two poor persons in rural areas per poor person in urban areas, which is an important indicator of a higher incidence of child labour in this sector as well.

In this context, it is hard not to suppose that working children primarily come from the population of persons living in poverty and extreme poverty. Experience has also shown that cultural practices and beliefs about childhood and adolescence have a strong impact, but poverty doubtlessly is an important factor in this phenomenon's origin.

Based on these figures, it is even more crucial than ever that the measures proposed by the government in its Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction (ECERP) be implemented more efficiently, as well as other actions taken by various institutions and society in general. In this way, a significant reduction of the numbers of the nation's people living in poverty or extreme poverty can be brought about. In addition, child labour rates must be taken as an important indicator of impoverishment.

Employment is also a decisive factor in the economic deterioration or improvement of people. In 2001, out of Nicaragua's total population, the Economically Active Population (EAP)

was comprised of 1.9 million persons, of whom 64% were men and only 36% women. In Table #1.3, employment figures for that year are summarised, and it is noted that whereas 88.7% were employed in the technical sense, full-time employment, that is, at positions with standard working shifts paid at minimum wage or better, stood at only 54.1% of the EAP.

**Table #1.3**  
**Main employment indicators**

Indicator	%
Participation rate <sup>7</sup>	49.7
Employment rate <sup>8</sup>	88.7
Full employment rate	54.1
Underemployment rate <sup>9</sup>	34.6
Unemployment rate	11.3

Source: Household survey, July 2001, MITRAB

Open unemployment<sup>10</sup>, observed over an entire decade (see Chart #1.3), rose to its highest point in 1993, at 17.8%. This rate fell to 9.8% in 2000, but has since worsened as the jobs needed by the EAP were not created, leading to the subsequent rise in open unemployment. Another factor fuelling the rise in the unemployment rate has been the dismantling of the state apparatus as a result of agreements made with international entities.

According to the EMNV surveys carried out in 1998 and 2001, employment in the informal sector of the economy has grown, while that in the formal sector has diminished from 53.1% in 1998 to 50.2% in 2001. Employment of children primarily takes place in the informal sector. It can also be observed that the increase in the economically active

population, particularly the young one, is not being absorbed by the formal sector, thus these persons end up in the ranks of the unemployed, working at odd jobs, or for family businesses, as the following table shows.

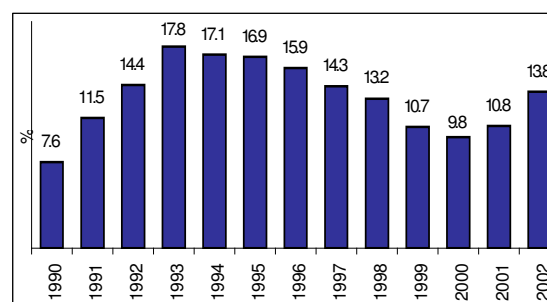
**Table #1.4**  
**Employment rate by category in employment, 1998 and 2001 (in %)**

Category in employment	1998	2001
Independent workers	31.1	33.0
Employers	3.6	5.0
Own account workers	27.5	28.0
Salaried workers	53.1	50.2
Employee / labourer	42.2	40.0
Casual worker / Peon	10.6	10.0
Co-operative member	0.2	0.2
Other	0.1	0.0
Unpaid family worker	15.8	17.0

Source: EMNV 1998 and 2001, INEC.

Like other developing countries, Nicaragua is witnessing a rise in the percentage of jobs in the tertiary sector<sup>11</sup>, which employs 48.9% of the employed EAP. In second place is the primary sector<sup>12</sup> with 34.2%, and in final place the secondary sector<sup>13</sup>, which generated only 16.9% of jobs, according to the EMNV survey of 2001.

**Chart #1.3**  
**Evolution of open unemployment rate, 1990-2002**



Source: Central Bank of Nicaragua, 2002

<sup>7</sup> This is the relationship between the EAP and the population in working age (10 years old and over).

<sup>8</sup> The employment rate is the percentage of the economically active population that is employed.

<sup>9</sup> It refers to visible and invisible underemployment. The first means that the person involuntarily works less than 40 hours a week. The second occurs when less than the minimum wage in the corresponding sector is received, even when the person works 40 hours or more per week.

<sup>10</sup> It refers to those persons without work but who are willing and able to work.

<sup>11</sup> The tertiary sector comprises: trade, hotels and restaurants; community, social and personal services; transportation, storage and communications; electricity, gas and water; financial and insurance establishments.

<sup>12</sup> The primary sector comprises agriculture, silviculture and forestry.

<sup>13</sup> The secondary sector includes: manufacturing; construction; mining and quarrying.

This concentration of employment in the tertiary sector is due to some extent to globalisation and the ensuing increased commercial and financial trade among countries. In this sense, the inflow of multinationals, as well as national and foreign capital is geared toward the service and trade sectors, which gives rise to the creation of more employment in these sectors than in the others. Another reason is related to the existence of better salaries, high enough to purchase the basic shopping basket of 53 products<sup>14</sup>, as shown in Table #1.5.

**Table #1.5**  
**Average wages and coverage of the basic shopping basket, by industry**

Industry	Average wages		Average wages / cost of basic shopping basket
	C\$	US\$	
Construction	3,025.0	225.0	1.7
Trade, restaurants, and hotels	4,353.8	323.8	2.4
Manufacturing industry	3,272.9	243.4	1.8
Community, social, and personal services	3,404.5	253.2	1.9
Agriculture and livestock	704.0	52.4	0.4
Central government	2,412.3	179.4	1.3

Source: EMNV 2001, INEC

If the traits of the job market are analysed with respect to sex, women have a higher risk of being unemployed, with this inequality being even more marked among rural women and those living in extreme poverty. According to the EMNV survey of 2001, 13.0% of women in general were unemployed, as opposed to 10.3% of men. However, among women in extreme poverty 25.6% were unemployed versus 9.4% of men, and the situation of rural women was even worse, with 30.5% unemployed as opposed to 8.0% of those men.

#### 1.4 What is the educational level of Nicaragua's population?

According to the 2001 EMNV survey, the illiteracy rate reached 20.5% for all persons 10 years of age and older in the year 2001. Progress in the reduction of this rate has not been notable despite the efforts made, due to the Ministry of Education's budget deficit, among other reasons. According to the Nicaragua Human Development Report, issued in 2002<sup>15</sup>, the various literacy programs, both governmental and independent, that exist in the country only assist 57,750 persons annually, less than 10% of the 779,404 illiterate persons over age 10 in the country.

Illiteracy has changed over time according to geographic region, as seen in Table #1.6. In general terms, the rate fell from 23.5% in 1993 to 20.5% in 2001, not a significant change in almost a decade. Nevertheless, the most worrisome aspect is the rise in illiteracy in the urban areas of the Atlantic, Central, and to a lesser extent, Pacific zones, a phenomenon that can be associated with the migration from the countryside to cities which lack school facilities, and where poverty impedes access to education for most. In 2001, the highest rates of illiteracy were in the rural areas of the country's Atlantic and Central zones

**Table #1.6**  
**Illiteracy of the population 10 years of age and over, by geographic region**

Region	Illiteracy rate (%)		
	1993	1998	2001
Country average	23.5	20.9	20.5
Managua	14.7	9.7	9.5
Urban Pacific	10.8	11.7	11.3
Rural Pacific	26.9	24.1	23.4
Urban Central	15.0	14.5	18.9
Rural Central	48.2	40.8	39.6
Urban Atlantic	15.2	19.2	18.2
Rural Atlantic	46.9	44.2	39.9

Source: EMNV 1993, 1998, and 2001, INEC.

<sup>14</sup> According to the Central Bank of Nicaragua, the cost of the basket of goods was C\$7,979.15 (US\$147) in that year.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, 2002.

Illiteracy among 10 to 17 year olds is markedly differentiated between the sexes: greater numbers of males are illiterate than females, with higher frequency in rural areas.

**Table #1.7**  
Illiteracy by sex and area of residence, by age group (in %)

Age group	Men	Women	Urban area	Rural area	Country average
10-14	14.9	9.8	5.7	20.6	12.4
15-17	15.1	9.2	5.7	21.3	12.1

Source: EMNV 2001, INEC.

It has become increasingly clear that education is the key to people's social and economic development. Moreover, in the life of a human being, education constitutes a systematic and ongoing process, and logically, early childhood education, including primary school, is its foundation.

Seen as such, education should be a priority issue of national governments and society in general. However, Nicaragua still shows discouraging signs in this area, although according to the Nicaragua Human Development Report issued in 2002<sup>15</sup>, the country's population does consider that education opens up new opportunities. They view it as essential for access to better living conditions, and an existence with fewer worries and constraints and more opportunities, allowing for social integration as opposed to exclusion and marginalisation.

Access to education is an ongoing concern. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MECD) and figures from the National Institute of Statistics and the Census (INEC), the net rates<sup>17</sup> of enrolment are: 26.1 for pre-school, 81.1 for primary school, and 37.2 for high school. This means that more

than 800,000 children between 3 and 17 years cannot exercise their lawful right to an education.

On the other hand, high dropout rates continue to be one of the worst problems that the nation's education system faces. Some of the causes are pupils' lack of motivation, child labour, high costs, and poorly trained teachers, among others. The following table provides a more complete overview of the problem.

**Table #1.8**  
Dropout rates in primary and secondary school, 1997-2001 (in %)

Level	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Primary	11.4	8.0	7.1	5.3	5.8
Secondary	13.8	12.1	11.2	8.7	8.1

Source: MECD.

Similarly, according to the ENDESA 2001 survey, the percentage of youngsters repeating the same grade in which they were enrolled in the preceding year, is 15.8% and 14.7% in first grade of primary school for girls and boys, respectively, reaching 17.8% and 12.2% for girls and boys, respectively, at the same school level in rural areas.

Expenditure on education has risen overall in the last 5 years, doubling in absolute terms from 79 million dollars in 1995, which amounted to 13.5% of government expenses, to 161 million dollars in 2001, or 16.3% of the total budget.

According to Table #1.9, looking at this outlay of funds per student in the most basic level of instruction (pre-school, primary, and high school), the rise in spending is concentrated at the primary school level, diminishing at the pre-school and secondary levels. This is due to, among other reasons, the fact that many education centres entered a self-funding or autonomous administrative regime which allowed local school administrations, by means of school council resolutions, to establish their own

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> UNDP, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Quotient between enrollment of children in the corresponding ages and the entire population at these ages.

quotas and collect tuition through voluntary contributions from the students' families.

**Table #1.9**  
**Current cost per student, 1995 and 2000**  
**(in nominal dollars)**

Educational levels	1995	2000
Pre-school	16.5	5.6
Primary	38.6	54.7
Secondary	28.9	32.2

Source: Nicaragua Human Development Report, 2002, UNDP.

### 1.5 Nicaraguans' living conditions

Housing, besides being the physical space of a home, is also where the ties of security and solidarity are established, along with ethical and spiritual values instilled, in the critical developmental stages of girls and boys. As such, it is believed that deficient living conditions mar the quality of life of a family and limits their development.

In this sense, conditions in Nicaraguans' households are far from being optimal. Potable water, one of the most important basic needs for human health, was available either inside or outside the dwelling in only 61.8% of the cases, according to the 1993 EMNV survey. In 2001, this percentage had risen to 65.9%. In rural areas, the situation was even more precarious: only 26.6% of dwellings in 1993 and 32.2% in 2001 had access to potable water.

In 1993, 81.7% of dwellings had a flush toilet or latrine, with this figure rising to 85.6% in 2001. Similarly, the percentage of dwellings with access to electricity went from 70.6% in 1993 to 72.2% in 2001. Only a slow increase in access to these services is observable, which implies a hindrance for the full development of all family members, above all children, in their most critical stages

Overcrowding<sup>18</sup> was present in 47.7% of

dwellings in 1993, increasing to 48.7% in 2001. A number of studies have shown that overcrowding, associated with poverty, not only generates frustration in human beings who are in the process of building their own identity, but that it also contributes to intra-family domestic violence, as well as aggressive forms of communication among family members. In the case of children, it can cause premature abandonment of the home to search for their own identity and improved well-being.

The head of household, likewise, often determines the level of aspirations and development of the household's members. In addition to many socio-economic difficulties present, it is important to note that many Nicaraguan households are headed by a woman who is generally the mother of the young members of the family, implying that the full responsibility for both the home and children falls on these women

In 1993, the number of households with a female head, according to the EMNV survey, was 28.1%, which had risen to 28.3% in 2001. Various studies have revealed that, in such households, the women in charge have limited job opportunities, the family income is lower, poverty is more common, and the risk for child labour is higher.

Regarding health care, according to the 2001 EMNV survey, 38.0% of the population reported having been ill or injured during the month preceding the survey, and of these, approximately half had received some kind of medical attention.

Both the poor and non-poor get ill at approximately the same rate (38.8% and 37.1%, respectively), but the kind of medical care received varies

<sup>18</sup> Overcrowding is defined according to the methodology established by the Unmet Basic Needs (NBI) as being 4 or

more persons in a single room or bedroom in urban areas, and 5 or more persons in a single room or bedroom in rural areas.

considerably between the two populations. Among the non-poor, 55.7% reported having received medical attention, while only 42.7% of the poor had done so. The poor explained not going to the doctor as being for lack of money (20.0%), due to their already knowing what ailed them (39.2%), because medical care was deficient in quality (11.3%), or because the ailment was minor (19.1%).

Nicaraguans in general have little chance of getting medical insurance coverage, whether through the

Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security (INSS) or with private insurers. Only 8.8% of the total population is insured, and among the poor and extremely poor, the figures are only 2.9% and 1.1%, respectively, compared to 13.8% of the non-poor. In rural areas, only 1.0% of the extremely poor has any form of health insurance. It bears noting that a populace with health deficiencies cannot contribute effectively to their own families' development, or to that of the country as a whole.

## 2. Analysis of Working Children

### 2.1 How many working children were there at the time of the survey, and what was their geographic distribution?

According to the figures gathered in the survey, 314,012 children had worked at some point in their lives, and of these, 253,057 were still working at the time of the survey. This means that 14.3% of all of the nation's boys and girls in these ages (5 to 17 years) were workers. Of them, 187,523 (74.1%) were male and 65,534 (25.9%) were female.

INEC's population estimates of children between 5 and 17 years old in each department were useful in an analysis of the distribution of working children, both for each department and for urban and rural areas within each department.

As can be observed in Table #2.1, in the Autonomous North Atlantic Region (RAAN), the work affects 21.6% of its children between 5 and 17 years of age, followed by Madriz with 18.0%, Jinotega with 17.7%, and the Autonomous South Atlantic Region (RAAS) and Nueva Segovia, both with 17.2%.

In analysing numbers of working children by area of residence, it becomes evident that the rural sector has the highest incidence, with 20.3% of its children working, while in the urban sector this figure is 9.2%.

In general, percentages of children who work are higher in rural areas in all provinces. However, comparing the rural areas of provinces with each other, those with the highest percentages are RAAS (28.6%), Chinandega (25.7%), and RAAN (25.1%). The preceding figures imply that in the rural areas of these provinces, over a fourth of all the children between 5 and 17 years of age are workers.

Other provinces with a high incidence of work among rural children are: Leon (22.9%), Madriz (22.7%), Boaco (21.3%), Nueva Segovia (20.7%), Esteli (20.7%), Matagalpa (20.1%) and Jinotega (19.2%).

**Table #2.1**  
**Working children by area, by province**

Province	Percent distribution	Work rate		
		Total	Area	
			Urban	Rural
<b>National average</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>21.0</b>
Nueva Segovia	5.0	17.2	13.2	20.7
Jinotega	7.3	17.7	11.8	19.2
Madriz	3.2	18.0	4.8	22.7
Esteli	4.3	16.0	12.3	20.7
Chinandega	8.2	14.6	7.1	25.7
Leon	7.8	15.6	9.7	22.9
Matagalpa	10.4	16.2	8.7	20.1
Boaco	3.7	16.6	6.4	21.3
Managua	16.7	10.6	10.1	16.8
Masaya	3.9	10.2	6.9	14.9
Chontales	3.2	13.4	10.1	17.3
Granada	2.8	12.0	8.5	17.6
Carazo	2.4	11.3	7.7	16.4
Rivas	2.8	13.4	13.1	13.5
Rio San Juan	2.0	15.5	7.9	17.8
RAAN	7.4	21.6	12.4	25.1
RAAS	8.8	17.2	1.8	28.6

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Despite the fact that in all provinces the percentage of children who work is higher in rural areas than in urban zones, it is important to note that those provinces with the highest urban work rates are: Nueva Segovia (13.2%), Rivas (13.1%), RAAN (12.4%), Esteli (12.3%), and Jinotega (11.8%).

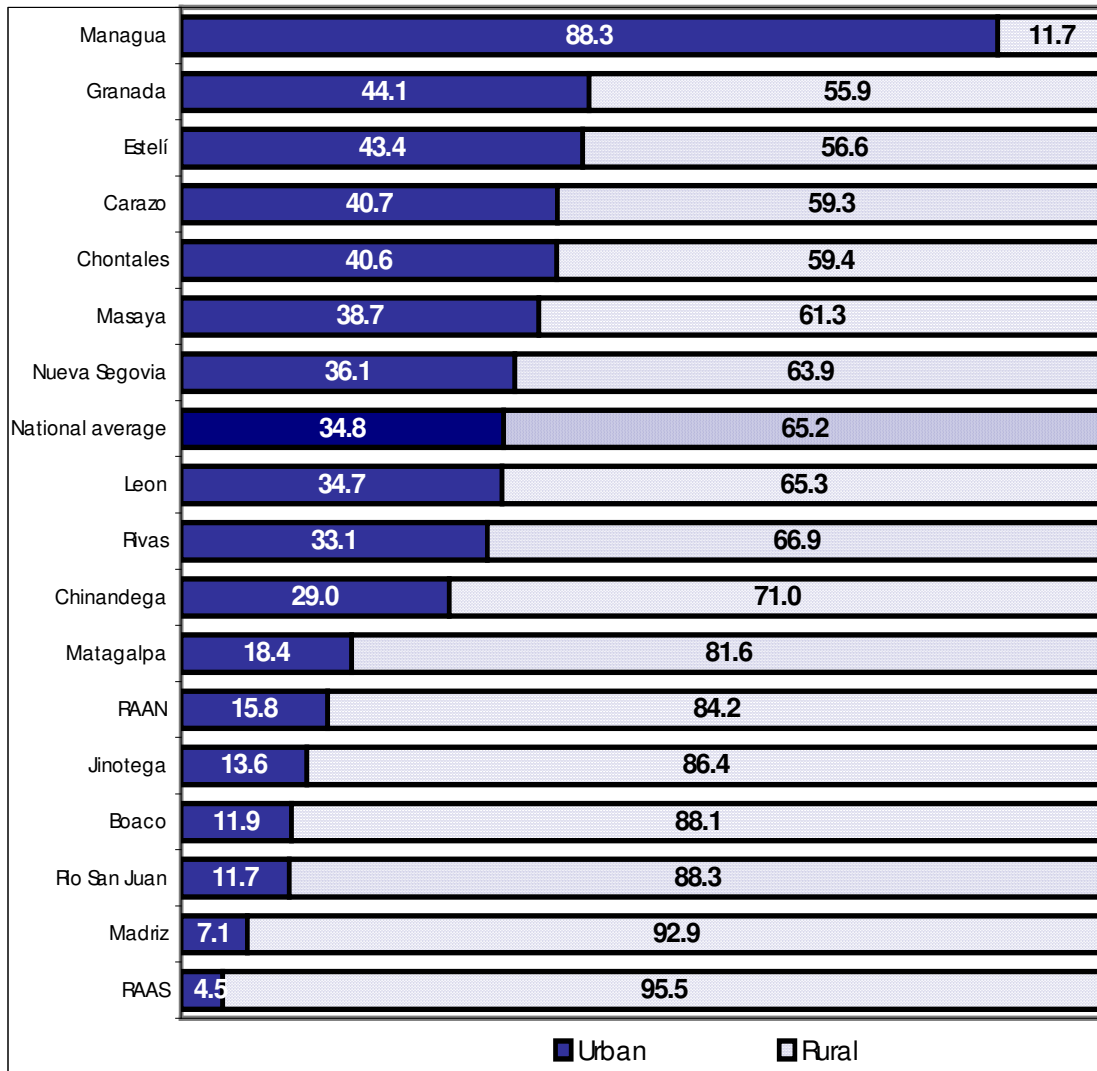
Chart #2.1 presents the distribution of working children by area of residence within each department, and shows that in Managua children's work is mainly urban, with 88.3% of children's work being done by urban residents. In addition, the provinces where the percentage of working children that are urban residents is higher than the

national average (34.8%) are Granada, Esteli, Carazo, Chontales, Masaya, and Nueva Segovia.

The percentage of working children that are rural residents is higher in RAAS, Madriz, Rio San Juan, Boaco, Jinotega, RAAN, Matagalpa, and Chinandega, with figures ranging from 95.5% to 71.0%.

The preceding figures could serve as guidelines to review the interventions carried out in those departments with the highest incidence of children's work, and also become part of the process of identifying the most hazardous forms of child labour in the country.

**Chart #2.1**  
**Working Children by Province, by area of residence**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

## 2.2 What were the incomes earned by working children?

As can be imagined, income levels are linked to industry. Analysing both

aspects and relating them to sex, the following chart reveals that of the 253,057 working children, only 101,536 (40.1%) reported receiving an income for their work; the rest worked simply as

unpaid assistants or received remuneration in kind.

- In all salary ranges, female working children were at a disadvantage despite their generally higher level of schooling. Whereas 50.1% of these working girls received C\$400 (US\$32) a month or less, only 37.7% of working boys were paid similarly low wages.

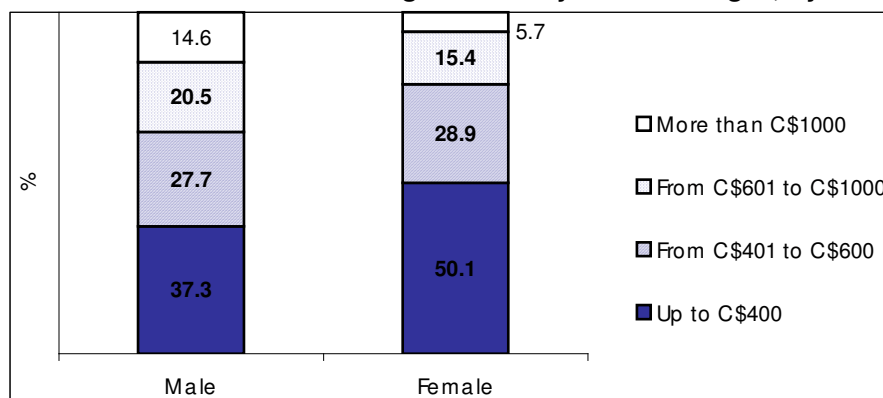
- While only 15.4% of working girls received anywhere from C\$601 (US\$47)

to C\$1,000 (US\$79) monthly, 20.5% of working boys were paid these higher wages.

- 14.6% of working boys got monthly wages of more than C\$1,000 (US\$79), only 5.7% of working girls did so.

It is clear that in addition to schooling levels, industry and occupation, sex is another variable that influences the amount of wages that are paid to working children.

**Chart #2.2**  
Percent distribution of working children by income ranges, by sex



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

In analysing the monthly incomes of boy and girl workers by industry, it is noted that:

- 40.5% of working children received C\$400 (US\$32) or less, and only 12.3% received monthly wages of more than C\$1,000 (US\$79).

- The lowest wages of up to C\$400 (US\$32) were earned in community, social, and personal services, and agriculture, forestry, and fishing (57.6% and 39.9%, respectively). Most working children were engaged in these industries.

**Table #2.2**  
Distribution of working children by monthly income distribution

Up to C\$400 (US\$ 32)		C\$401 - 600 (US\$ 32-47)		C\$601 - 1000 (US\$ 47-79)		More than C\$1000 (US\$ 79)		Total
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
41,090	40.5	28,428	28.0	19,486	19.2	12,532	12.3	101,536

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

## 3. Conditions in which Working Children Live

### 3.1. Introduction

Taking into account the importance that living conditions have for human well-being and development, and given that ENTIA 2000, according to its design and objectives, provides the necessary information to study the housing conditions of working children and adolescents between 5 and 17 years of age, such an analysis is carried out. As far as it is possible and relevant, the following analysis compares the housing conditions of children and adolescents who work with those who do not.

First, 164,189 dwellings were inhabited by working children between 5 and 17 years of age, as opposed to the 502,649 dwellings of youngsters of the same ages who did not work. In general, 1 out of 4 dwellings with youngsters had at least one working child. Chart #3.1 shows this distribution

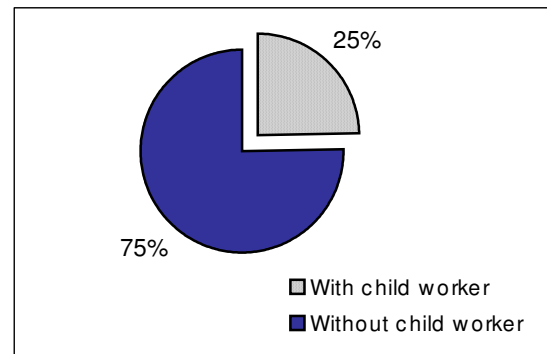
### 3.2. What kind of housing do the families of working children and adolescents live in?

An important aspect to be considered is that, one way or another, housing conditions affect the household members' involvement in activities outside the home. Where working children lived, housing conditions were less favourable than for those who did not. As shown in Chart #3.2, 18.5% of dwellings where working children lived were shacks, in contrast with only 10.0% of dwellings inhabited by youngsters who did not work. A total of 84.5% of the latter group lived in "formal houses" as opposed to only 74.1% of children and adolescents who worked. These are the two most significant differences between these two groups.

Similarly, 6.4% of child workers' households inhabited improvised

dwellings, whereas in the case of non-working children this happened in only 4.0% of the cases. Despite the fact that this is not a significant percentage difference, in Nicaragua as well as in other countries, such housing is constructed with plastic sheeting, wood scraps, cardboard, corrugated tin, etc., making them particularly unsuitable and even hazardous places to live.

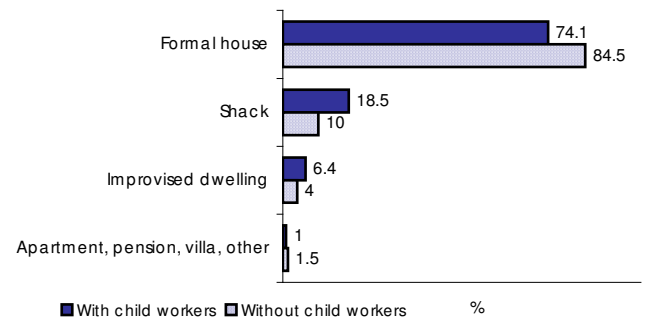
**Chart #3.1**  
Distribution of dwellings by children's work status



Note: Only those dwellings where children between 5 and 17 years live are analysed.

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

**Chart #3.2**  
Type of dwelling inhabited by children



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Surveys such as the EMNV 2001<sup>19</sup> make it possible to conduct an analysis of the

<sup>20</sup> Survey applied by the National Institute of Statistics and Census, INEC.

type of dwelling inhabited by Nicaraguan families in general, not only those with children and adolescents aged 5 –17 years. In this survey, it was shown that 91.4% of homes were “houses” and that 4.9% were “improvised” structures, as seen in Table # 3.1

**Table # 3.1**  
**Type of housing of Nicaraguan families**

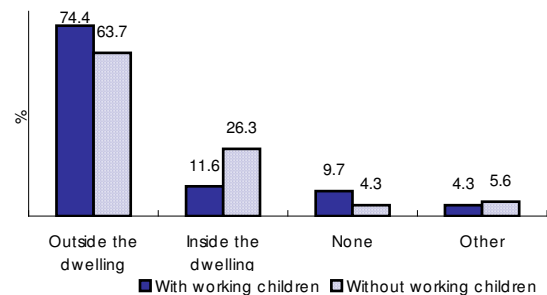
Type of housing	Number	Percent
House	892,672	91.4
Apartment, room, or country house	18,218	1.9
Shack	18,218	1.9
Improvised structure	47,540	4.9
Total	976,647	100.0

Source: ENMV 2001, INEC.

### 3.3. How sanitary are the conditions in Nicaraguan dwellings?

Hygiene in the home is determined in large part by access to water and sanitation facilities, which of course affects the health of household members. Whereas not having an indoor toilet or latrine is a serious shortcoming given the faecal contamination that may occur outdoors, by the same token, having a toilet or latrine that is not inside the dwelling is also a problem. As seen in Chart #3.3, in 9.7% of the dwellings occupied by working children, there was no standard sanitary facility or latrine, as opposed to only 4.3% of those dwellings in which children did not work. Even more significant is the contrast in housing with indoor toilet facilities: only 11.6% of dwellings with working children had them, versus 26.3% of those with non-working children.

**Chart #3.3**  
**Toilet facilities in dwellings, by children’s work status**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

According to the ENMV 2001 survey, 14% of all Nicaraguan dwellings had no standard sanitary facility of any kind.

Access to potable water is a fundamental resource for health and an important indicator of quality of life, and where it is lacking, the difficulties related to acquiring water give rise to contamination and sanitation problems. In Table #3.2, it can be observed that only 24.4% of dwellings with children who worked had access to potable water, that is, the service was available through indoor faucets. In dwellings where non-working children were present, this percentage was 41.1, reflecting the higher standard of living in these dwellings.

Another significant difference is that in 9.0% of dwellings with working children water was obtained from creeks or wells, which only occurred in 4.7% of dwellings where the children did not work. Such water sources are exposed to contamination of all kinds, and this situation is most common in the rural areas, where most working children live.

**Table #3.2**  
**Source of drinking water in dwellings, by children's work status**

Source of water	Without working children		With working children	
	Number	%	Number	%
Faucet/pipe within the dwelling	205,554	41.1	39,610	24.2
Faucet/pipe outside the dwelling	157,541	31.5	49,533	30.2
Sanitary well	9,109	1.8	3,955	2.4
Hand-drawn well	71,109	14.2	39,175	23.9
Hand pump	11,670	2.3	7,339	4.5
Stream of pond	23,360	4.7	14,776	9.0
Other	21,815	4.4	9,451	5.8
Total	500,158	100	163,839	100
No response	2,491	-	350	-

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

In order for families supply themselves with water, children are often sent to haul it back to the home, one of their hardest, most tiring household chores given the excessive weight carried and distance covered.

Figures from the EMNV 2001 survey also reveal that at the national level, only 25% of Nicaraguan dwellings had potable water through indoor faucets or pipes, as seen in Table #3.3.

**Table #3.3**  
**Main source of water in Nicaraguan dwellings**

Main water source	Number	%
Indoor faucet or pipe	242,174	24.8
Outdoor faucet or pipe, within property	358,576	36.7
Public spigot	33,274	3.4
Public or private well	188,246	19.3
River, spring, or ravine	92,792	9.5
Cistem truck, cart, or tubing	7,095	0.7
Other dwelling, neighbour/business	52,818	5.4
Other	1,672	0.2
Total	976,647	100.0

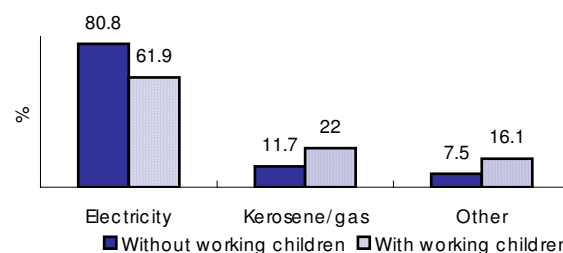
Source: EMNV 2001, INEC.

### 3.4. What kind of lighting did Nicaraguan dwellings have?

The availability of lighting in the dwellings determines in large part the ability to study or engage in recreational

activities when sunlight is lacking. As presented in Chart #3.4, where the various forms of lighting in Nicaraguan dwellings are graphed, 61.9% of dwellings with working children did not have access to electric lighting, as opposed to 80.8% of the other group. Moreover, 22.0% of dwellings with working children were illuminated by means of gas or kerosene, in contrast with only 11.7% of the group without working children. It goes without saying that the use of such gas or kerosene is dangerous, exposing children to the risk of burns and other accidents that might be life-threatening, along with fires frequently resulting in fatalities.

**Chart #3.4**  
**Forms of lighting in dwellings, by children's work status**



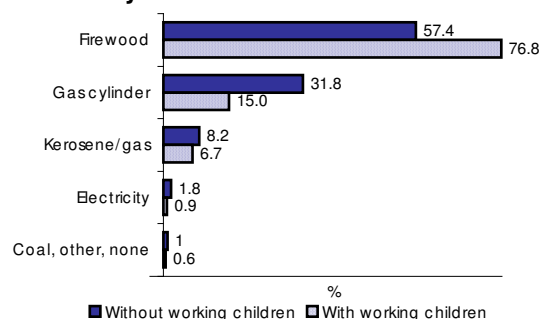
Source: ENTIA 2000 MITRAB

### 3.5. Which fuels are used for cooking in Nicaraguan homes?

Often the type of cooking fuel used in the dwelling also determines the workload falling on women and children, especially young girls, as well

as exposure to hazards. The disadvantage of the group of dwellings with working children is worth noting, since 76.8% use firewood for cooking, in contrast with only 57.4% of those in the other group. This reflects the harsher living conditions faced by the former group. Note also that in only 15.0% of dwellings with working children was the cooking done with butane gas cylinders, whereas for the group without working children this figure was 31.8%.

**Chart #3.5**  
Types of cooking fuel used in dwellings, by children's work status



Source: ENTIA 2000. MITRAB

At the national level, according to the EMNV 2001 survey, 63.2% of all dwellings used firewood for cooking.

### 3.6. General economic activity of the head of the household

ENTIA 2000 inquired into the global income of households and its origin. In the case of households of working children, only 26.4% of the total income earned was derived from regular or steady employment, in contrast with households without child workers, where such steady income totalled 45.8%. This reveals the uncertain situation of working children's households. In addition, 11.1% of the income of these households came from agricultural work, as opposed to only 5.5% of the income earned in households without working children.

**Table #3.4**  
Activity from which children's households derive their main income, by children's work status

Activity	Without working children		With working children	
	Number	%	Number	%
Self-employed	204,279	40.8	96,681	59.0
Agricultural work	27,291	5.5	18,199	11.1
Another temporary job	12,331	2.5	2,212	1.4
Regular employment	228,951	45.8	43,238	26.4
Pensions, dividends, interests, rent	9,703	1.9	1,199	0.7
Another source	17,603	3.5	2,310	1.4
Total	500,158	100.0	163,839	100.0
No response	2,491	-	350	0.2
	502,649	-	164,189	-

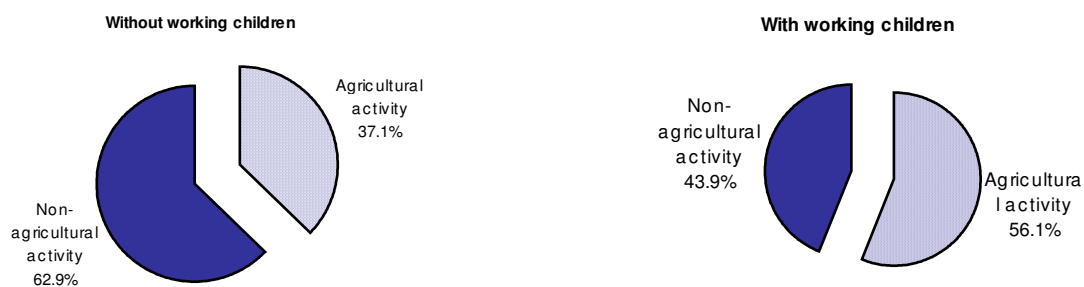
Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Another major difference is noted in the income derived from own-account activities. In households with working children, such activities accounted for 59.0% of income, in contrast with just 40.8% for the group without working children.

It should be emphasised that own account work is the most common type of activity in both groups, and this type of work was further divided into agricultural versus non-agricultural. The results show that working children's households, income from agricultural types of own-account activity amounted to 56.1% of the total amount earned, as opposed to only 37.1% of the income for the homes of non-working children.

The preceding figures suggest that in working children's households, income sources are less stable and systematic than in the other group, with the subsequent higher pressure for survival on those families in which children work. Nonetheless, conditions were not optimal in either group. It must be added that agricultural types of activity yield the lowest earnings.

**Chart #3.6**  
**Type of own-account economic activity, by children's work status**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

### 3.7. What are average expenses in Nicaraguan households?

In Appendix A of the ENTIA 2000 survey, which was directed at parents or guardians of children aged 5 -17 years, questions were included regarding average monthly household expenditure, whose results appear in Table #3.5.

**Table #3.5**  
**Average monthly expenses of children's households by children's work status, by item (in cordobas)**

	Average monthly household expenditure (in cordobas <sup>20</sup> )		
	All households <sup>21</sup>	With working children	Without working children
Food	1,072.34	944.5	1,114.22
Transportation	147.35	120.09	156.28
Education	192.39	122.71	215.21
Kerosene/ gas	60.7	44.44	66.02
Cleaning supplies	88.85	81.24	91.35
Medicines	134.55	105.72	143.99
Electricity	83.32	50.21	94.16
Water	52.84	31.34	59.88
Other expenses	153.69	115.32	166.26
Total expenses	1,986.02	1,615.56	2,107.37

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Analysing the various sorts of expenses, the most relevant are those for schooling. An average of just C\$122.71 (US\$10) was spent in households of working children, versus C\$215.21 (US\$17) by those households in which working children were not present, that is, almost double the amount spent by the first group. The low investment made in schooling correlates with the high dropout rates occurring in these households.

Other expenses were also lower working children's households, in spite of the fact that they were comprised of more member than in the other group.

There is not doubt that for families of working children, there were disadvantaged living conditions in every aspect examined, although, as has already been stated previously, the situation for those families in which working children were not present could not be considered optimal, either.

<sup>20</sup> Conversion rate: C12.6844 cordobas = US\$1.00

<sup>21</sup> All the households with children and adolescents aged 5 -17 years

## 4. Households of Working Children

### 4.1 Introduction

In order to go deeper into the basic aspects of the lives of Nicaragua's working children, an analysis of the main features of their households is carried out, which includes key qualitative and quantitative data. They are essential for the recommendation and implementation of effective policies, strategies, and practices in the process of preventing and eliminating child labour, and for the protection of those children who are working

Variables analysed in this section are, above all, related to geographic area, number of family members, sex of heads of households, and the industries that they were involved in, with their occupations and wages earned. A comparative analysis of income earned by working children and by other members of their households is also done. Finally, a close comparison is made of the income earned by working children and that earned by heads of households.

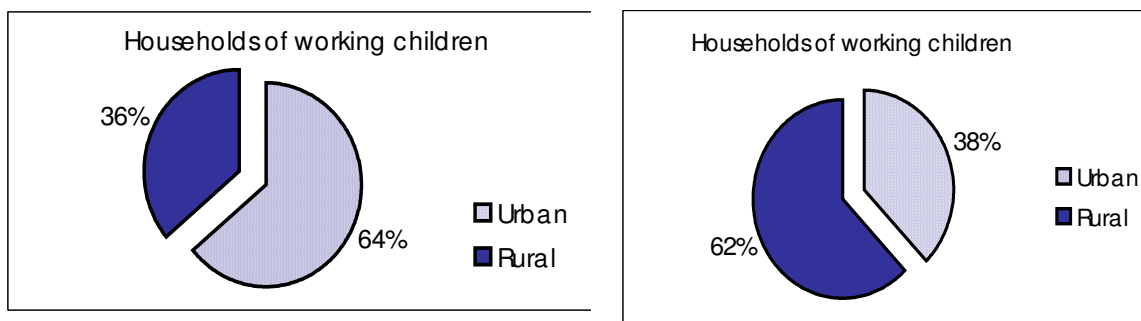
ENTIA 2000 estimated that there were a total of 925,965 households in the entire nation. Of these, only 666,838 had children between 5 and 17 years of age. At least one working child lived in 164,189 households, leaving 502,649 with no working children.

This section analyses the two kinds of households, those with working children in contrast with those without, which allows for a comparative analysis of both realities, with results shown as follows.

### 4.2 Where are working children's households located?

Households with working children are mainly found in rural areas. A total of 102,128 (62.2%) of working children's households were in rural areas. It bears mentioning that in households with non-working children, the distribution was inverted: 64.0% were in urban areas. This figure confirms that the higher incidence of work among children is in rural areas, as the following chart shows.

**Chart #4.1**  
Percent distribution of households by area of residence, by children's work status

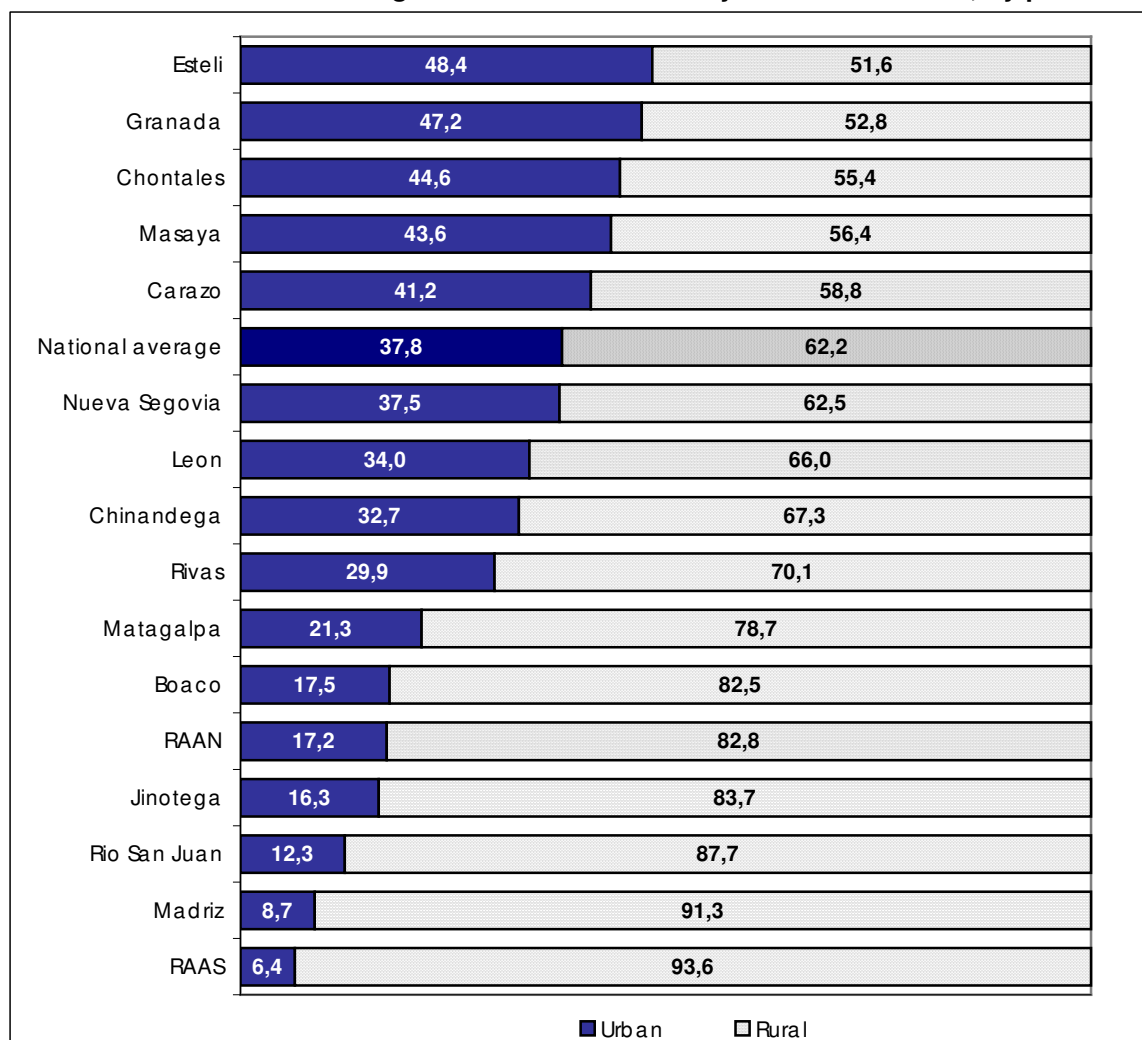


Source: EMNV 2001, INEC.

In Chart #4.2, the distribution of these households by province is presented, being RAAS, Madriz, Río San Juan, Jinotega, RAAN, Matagalpa, and Rivas

those where the largest percentage of rural households of working children is found, higher than the national average (62.2%).

**Chart #4.2**  
**Percent distribution of working children's households by area of residence, by province**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Carrying out another type of analysis, namely, separating the urban sector from the rural one, it is revealed that out of all the rural households of working children, the provinces where most of them are concentrated were Matagalpa and RAAS, with 12.8% and 11.8%, respectively, as shown in the following table.

**Table #4.1**  
**Distribution of working children's households by area, by province (in %)**

Province	Urban	Rural	Total
Matagalpa	5.7	12.8	10.1
RAAS	1.3	11.8	7.8
Jinotega	3.1	9.7	7.2

RAAN	3.1	9.1	6.8
Chinandega	6.8	8.5	7.9
Leon	7.0	8.3	7.8
Nueva Segovia	5.2	5.3	5.2
Madriz	0.8	5.1	3.4
Boaco	1.6	4.5	3.4
Masaya	4.8	3.8	4.2
Rivas	2.4	3.5	3.1
Esteli	5.3	3.5	4.2
Managua	41.2	3.3	17.6
Granada	4.3	2.9	3.4
Chontales	3.7	2.8	3.1
Rio San Juan	0.6	2.7	1.9
Carazo	3.0	2.6	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

In the urban sector, it was the capital of Managua where the highest percentage of working children (41.2%) was found, because it holds the largest proportion of urban population in the country, followed by Leon and Chinadega.

In general, in addition to the capital area, the highest percentage of working children was found in the provinces of Matagalpa, Chinandega, Leon, Jinotega, RAAN, and RAAS.

#### 4.3 What were the characteristics of the heads of households of working children?

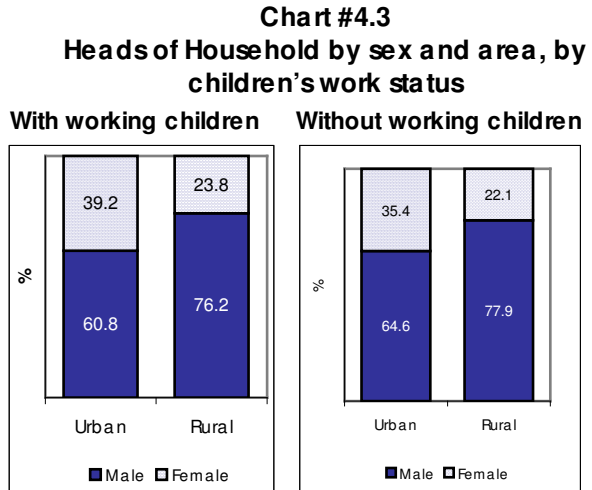
One feature that determines to a certain extent the composition of a household is the head of household. According to the results of ENTIA 2000, it was found that there were no significant differences in terms of the sex of the heads of households of working and non-working children. In both cases, about 30% of households had female heads, as seen in the table below:

**Table #4.2**  
Percent distribution of heads of children's households by children's work status, by sex

Sex of head of household	With working children	Without working children
Male	70.4	69.4
Female	29.6	30.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

However, in the analysis by area of residence, a slight difference is noted between male and female heads of household. In the urban area, female heads of household were more common in working children's households, amounting to almost 40%, compared to non-working children's households, with a percentage of 35.4% (as seen in Chart #4.3). In rural areas, female heads were about 23% in both types of households.



Fuente: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Taking the EMNV 2001 survey as reference and analysing the situation in all Nicaraguan households, it becomes evident that females accounted for 28.3% of all heads of household, rising to 34.2% in urban areas (as seen in Table #4.3). In contrast, the ENTIA 2000 survey revealed that in the same urban sector, the proportion of female heads in working children's households was significantly higher, close to 40%.

**Table #4.3**  
Percent distribution of Nicaraguan heads of household by sex, by area of residence

Area	Man	Woman
Urban	65.8	34.2
Rural	81.1	18.9
Total	71.7	28.3

Source: EMNV 2001, INEC.

While it is not the main cause of child labour, the fact that households are female-headed could favour its proliferation as a survival strategy, with a higher incidence in urban areas. In this context, child labour could also be getting institutionalised or be increasingly considered an easy alternative, without taking into account its adverse effects on children.

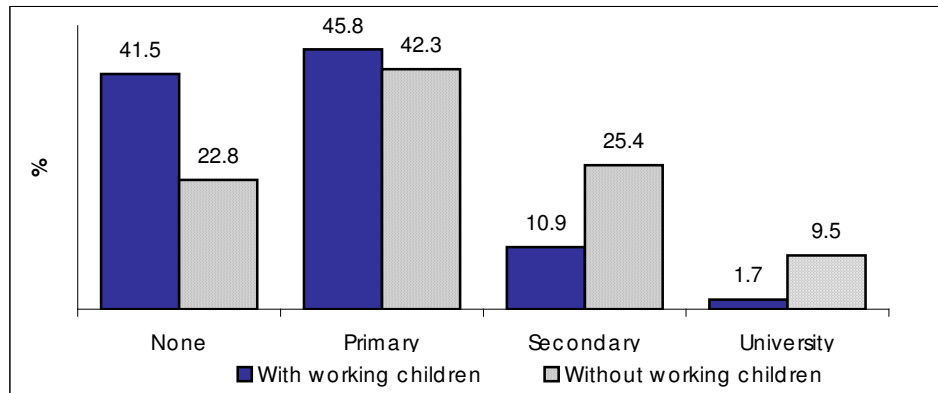
#### 4.4 What was the schooling level of heads of household?

It is well-known that the schooling levels of heads of household determine in great part the conduct and development of family members.

Therefore, it is crucial to analyse this variable within the context of working and non-working children's households.

The chart below compares the schooling levels of heads in the two kinds of households.

**Chart #4.4**  
**Schooling level of heads of children's households, by children's work status**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Those heads of household with little or no schooling are more frequent in the case of working children's households than in the case where no working children are found. An inverse relationship is observed in the case of heads of household with more schooling, particularly those who had high school or college education. A significant difference was noted for secondary education: 25.4% of heads of non-working children's households had attained this schooling level. In contrast, only 10.9% of heads of working children's households had reached this level of education.

Furthermore, in the case of working children, 41.5% of the heads of household had never been to school, in contrast with only 22.8% for the cases of heads of households of non-working children. Note also an important difference with respect to university education: 9.5% of the heads of household of non-working children had reached this schooling level, while only

1.7% of those in the case of working children had done so (see Chart #4.4)

Whereas the percentage difference between heads of household with a primary level of education in both groups is not large, a larger percentage was found in households of children who worked (45.8%). If this figure is related to the low percentage of heads of household who had reached high school, it could be inferred that heads of households of working children reached at most some primary level grade without going on to secondary school, just as was happening with their boys and girls, according to ENTIA 2000 which showed that the schooling level of working children was low and the proportion of average working students was high.

The preceding figures seem to suggest that the schooling level of heads of household is a key causal factor of child labour. Doubtlessly, education is an important element for building one's perceptions, world views, goals and aspirations.

#### 4.5 Which jobs did heads of household have?

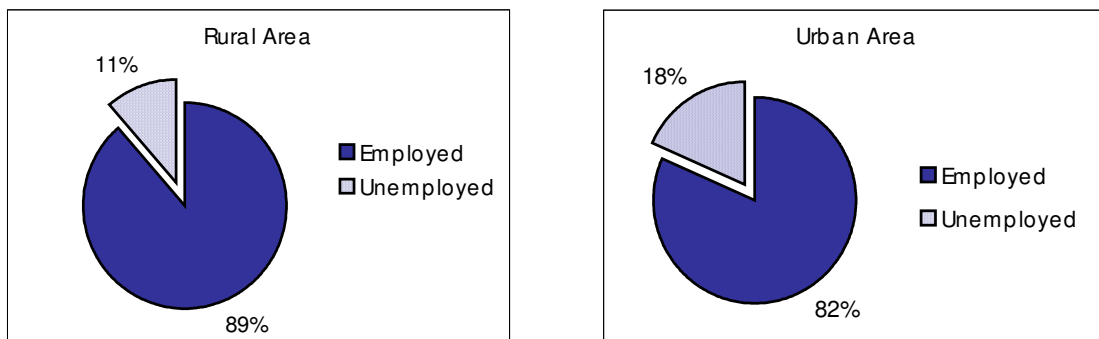
The jobs held by heads of household constitute another important element that is taken into account when evaluating potential causal factors of child labour, since one of the major justifications for child labour is the lack of decent work for adults.

In this regard, it was found that out of the total number of households of working children (164,189), 141,295 heads (86.1%) were employed at the time of the survey. The remainder, 22,894

(13.9% of the total), were unemployed or simply economically inactive. These are cases in which there was at least one working boy or girl in the household, but the head was out of work, and in most of these cases (8 out of every 10) the head of the household was not even seeking work.

If we analyse the traits of heads in working children's households by sex, area of residence, and schooling level in tandem with their employment situation, we get the results presented in Chart #4.5.

**Chart #4.5**  
Percent distribution of working children's heads of household by employment situation, by area of residence



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Unemployment among heads of household where working children are present was significantly higher in the urban area than in rural areas (18.2% vs. 11.3%). In that same year, according to

data provided by the Central Bank of Nicaragua, the unemployment rate in the country was 9.8%. The table below shows the employment picture overall in greater detail.

**Table #4.4**  
Percent distribution of working children's heads of household by area of residence, by employment situation

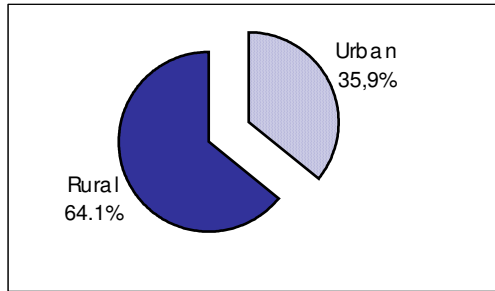
Employment situation of head of household	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Employed	50,735	81.8	90,560	88.7	141,295	86.1
Unemployed	11,326	18.2	11,568	11.3	22,894	13.9
Total	62,061	100.0	102,128	100.0	164,189	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Focusing the analysis only on the employed heads of households of working children, it can be observed that a higher percentage of them were

located in rural areas

**Chart #4.6**  
**Distribution of employed heads of working children's households, by area of residence**

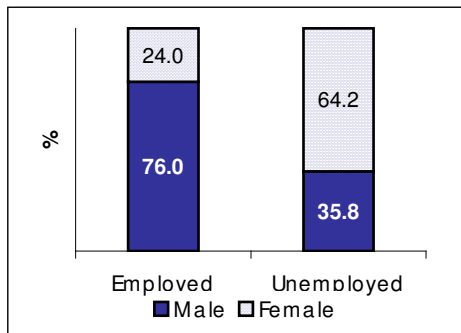


Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

However, a higher level of employment of heads of household in rural areas does not necessarily mean a better living situation for these households, given that wages in this area are the lowest.

Taking into account the sex of heads of household, a wide gap is seen between males and females in terms of their employment situation.

**Chart #4.7**  
**Percent distribution of heads of working children's household by sex, by employment status**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB

Among employed heads of household, 76.0% were males and only 24.0% were female. In contrast, the situation was reversed among the unemployed heads of household, with 64.2% being female and barely 35.8% males. These figures

reaffirm once again the disadvantage of female heads of household with respect to their employment situation, suggesting how this might bring about the incorporation of children into work activities.

#### 4.6 What were the schooling levels of heads of working children's household in terms of their employment situation?

According to Table #4.5, the most serious situation is reflected in the 53.2% of unemployed heads of household that have never gone to school. These households have very little chance of either bettering their standard of living or gradually breaking the cycle of poverty, and if in addition their children have begun working at an early age, it is very probable that when they are heads of households themselves, their homes will be poor ones as well.

**Table #4.5**  
**Schooling level of heads of working children's households by employment status, by level of schooling**

Level	Employed		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%
None	55,954	39.6	12,177	53.2
Some primary school	66,938	47.4	8,318	36.3
Some high school	16,152	11.4	1,826	8.0
Some university	2,251	1.6	573	2.5
Total	141,295	100.0	22,894	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

The percentage of employed heads of household with some education at primary and secondary levels was higher than that of unemployed heads of household. An important difference is in the level of primary school attended – 47.4% for employed heads of household and 36.6% for the unemployed heads of household. In many cases, those heads of household with some level of primary school attended had not concluded that schooling. The average educational level attained was relatively low and insufficient to have a positive effect in their lives, above all if we consider what is indicated in the report on Educational Progress in El Salvador 2002<sup>22</sup>, regarding a statement by CEPAL<sup>23</sup> (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) that at least twelve years of education are needed in order to reach an acceptable quality of life.

There is no doubt that Nicaragua must undertake rapid, effective, and permanent action in order to achieve universalised basic education in the short term, being basic education that which includes instruction at pre-school, primary, secondary, and technical levels.

Regarding the percentage of employed

and unemployed heads of household, the following chart shows that there were more unemployed heads in working children's households than in those of non-working children. Note that 13.9% of heads in households of working children, in contrast with almost 20% of heads of households of non-working children, were unemployed, as shown in Chart #4.8.

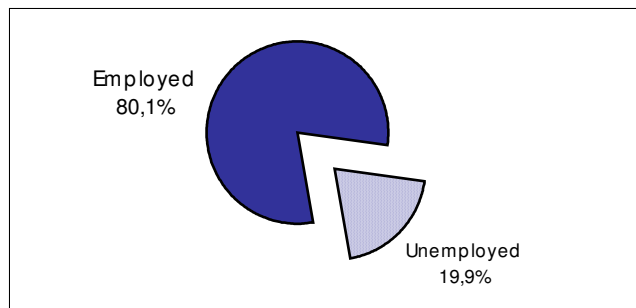
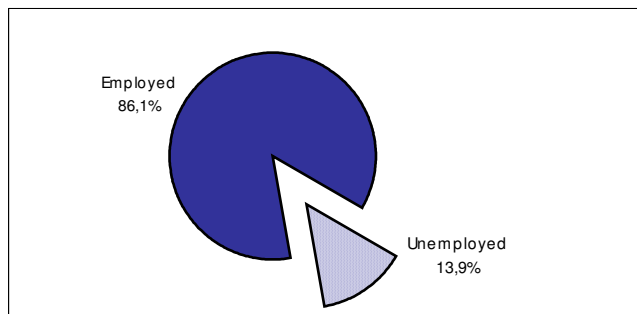
The preceding findings give rise to a number of observations. First, this confirms what has been said for some time on both an international and national levels, which is that child labour is multi-causal, and that whereas it is true that economic factors are important, they might not be the most important factors in all cases in which child labour occurs in families, because not all poor children work, and not all of the ones who do work come from the poorest backgrounds. On the other hand, this fact may also be a sign that the low income of the heads of household is due to their low level of schooling, and that even when they are employed, they still require economic support from their children.

<sup>22</sup> Report of Educational Progress 2002, El Salvador, PREAL page 12.

<sup>23</sup> CEPAL's report indicates that in order to have an 80% probability of escaping from poverty, 12 years of schooling are needed. CEPAL-UNESCO, Education and Knowledge: At the heart of fair productive transformation (summarized version). First edition, Lima, Peru, 1996

**Chart #4.8**

**Distribution of heads of household by employment status, by children's work status**  
**Heads of working children's households**                      **Heads of non-working children's households**



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB

A comparison of the occupations held by heads of working and non-working children's households yields the results presented in Table #4.6.

**Table #4.6**  
**Distribution of heads of children's households, by occupation held**

Occupation	Without working children		With working children	
	Number	%	Number	%
Unskilled workers	48,892	12.1	26,395	18.7
Skilled workers	60,263	15.0	14,202	10.1
Service workers	127,144	31.6	34,936	24.7
Administrators and technicians	28,167	7.0	3,544	2.5
Top technicians and professionals	22,890	5.7	1,591	1.1
Supervisors	115,312	28.6	60,627	42.9
Total	402,668	100	141,295	100

Note: Only heads of households employed at the time of the survey are analysed.

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

According to the preceding table, the percentage distribution of the occupations for the heads of working children's households leans toward small property owners and supervisors or bosses of various kinds (42.9%), due to the fact that this is typical of rural work and related to the roles of farmer, foreman, overseer, or crew chief for harvesting and weighing teams, etc.

The second most commonly held occupations are in services, with 24.7% accounted for here. These jobs include

domestic work, waiting on customers in restaurants and bars, etc., and according to ENTIA 2000, were among the most poorly remunerated positions.

In third place were unskilled occupations, accounting for 18.7%, and logically also being among the most poorly remunerated.

In contrast, the occupation distribution for heads of household of non-working children was completely different. A total of 31.6% of these heads were in services, followed by supervisors and owners with 28.6%, and finally skilled workers in 15.0%. These figures reflect the fact that this group of heads of household were less confined to given occupational areas, especially the most poorly remunerated.

An outstanding difference between these two groups of heads is that in relative terms, the third most important type of occupation held by heads of working children's households was that of unskilled worker, as opposed to the third most frequent type for the heads of non-working children's households, which was skilled workers. Job training makes a difference among both groups, since skilled workers receive better job benefits and employment opportunities, wages, and working conditions in general.

Another sign of the advantages of heads of non-working children's households is found in their higher percentage of administrative and technical positions, as well as higher technician and professional jobs. This confirms the negative correlation between better working conditions and schooling for heads of households and children's work.

Comparing the occupations held by working children with those of the heads

of their households, one notes that, as according to Table #4.7, girls and boys worked overwhelmingly as unskilled labourers, which meant that they received poor wages if at all, and that they worked in generally worse conditions. However, this form of work was the third most common for their heads of household. In second place for both groups was service worker, being the percentage slightly higher in the case of working children than in the group of their heads of household.

**Table #4.7**  
**Distribution of heads of household by children's work status, by head's occupation**

Occupation	Working children		Heads of households of working children	
	Number	%	Number	%
Unskilled workers	164,143	64.9	26,395	18.7
Skilled workers	9,527	3.8	14,202	10.1
Services	74,812	29.6	34,936	24.7
Administrators and technicians	2,259	0.9	3,544	2.5
Top technicians and professionals	390	0.1	1,591	1.1
Supervisors and owners	1,926	0.7	60,627	42.9
Total	253,057	100	141,295	100

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Occupational differences by area of residence were also analysed for heads of working children's households, as seen in Table #4.8. In the rural areas, the percentage distribution leaned toward supervisors (55.9%), with unskilled labourers in second position (22.0%), this

being a predominant occupation in the rural areas. Those living in urban areas primarily worked in the service sector (43.4%) and as supervisors in second place (19.8%). Overall, a higher number of trained workers were found in urban areas.

**Table #4.8**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households by area of residence, by occupation**

Occupation	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Unskilled workers	6,456	12.7	19,939	22.0	26,395	18.7
Skilled workers	8,743	17.2	5,459	6.0	14,202	10.1
Services	22,034	43.4	12,902	14.2	34,936	24.7
Administrators and technicians	2,346	4.6	1,198	1.3	3,544	2.5
Top technicians and professionals	1,112	2.2	479	0.5	1,591	1.1
Supervisors	10,044	19.8	50,583	55.9	60,627	42.9
Total	50,735	100.0	90,560	100.0	141,295	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

#### 4.7 In which industries were heads of household engaged?

With respect to industry, more than half of heads of working children's households (54.2%) were working in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, which, as has been noted earlier, are among the most poorly remunerated sectors. Another type of work with a high concentration from this group was

trade, largely informal, with uncertain earnings for the family and no social security benefits or health coverage. Third in rank was work in the services sector, both for the public at large and for private parties, which also had major disadvantages, above all in domestic positions. In addition to earning low salaries, there usually are no formal contracts signed for such positions, with more chances of being exploited.

**Table #4.9**  
**Distribution of heads of children's households by children's work status, by industry**

Industry	Without working children		With working children	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing	118,250	29.4	76,612	54.2
Mining and quarrying	1,630	0.4	1,365	1
Manufacturing industry	49,574	12.3	11,739	8.3
Electricity, gas, and water supply	4,637	1.2	424	0.3
Construction	26,972	6.7	6,573	4.7
Wholesales and retail trade	84,764	21.1	23,554	16.7
Transport, storage, and communications	21,791	5.4	3,197	2.3
Establishments and insurance	15,408	3.8	1,332	0.9
Community, social, and personal services	79,544	19.8	16,499	11.7
No response	98	0.0		
Total	402,668	100.0	141,295	100

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

With regard to industry by area of residence, the following can be observed:

Whereas agriculture, forestry, and fishing were the industries in which 54.2% of heads of working children's households

were active, this percentage rose considerably to 75.4% for those living in rural zones. Thus, with three-quarters of this group involved in these badly paid activities, their living conditions were much more precarious.

**Table #4.10**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households by area of residence, by industry**

Industry	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing	8,360	16.5	68,252	75.4	76,612	54.2
Mining and quarrying	304	0.6	1,061	1.2	1,365	1.0
Manufacturing industry	8,390	16.5	3,349	3.7	11,739	8.3
Electricity, gas, and water supply	424	0.8			424	0.3
Construction	3,881	7.6	2,692	3.0	6,573	4.7
Wholesales and retail trade	15,293	30.1	8,261	9.1	23,554	16.7
Transport, storage, and communications	2,887	5.7	310	0.3	3,197	2.3
Establishments and insurance	1,156	2.3	176	0.2	1,332	0.9
Community, social, and personal services	10,040	19.8	6,459	7.1	16,499	11.7
Total	50,735	100	90,560	100	141,295	100

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Trade activities of some kind were the most common in urban areas for those heads of household of children who worked (30.1%), occupying only second place (9.1%) in rural areas, far behind the main industry of agriculture, forestry, and fishing.

In the short term, trade activities represented the chance to obtain resources quickly for heads of households, with minimal or no requirements. In contrast with the rural environment, in the urban sector the percentage concentration was more dispersed among other industries: the

services sector stood at 19.8% of the total, whereas manufacturing and agriculture, forestry, and fishing, accounted for 16.5% each.

Also of interest is the way industry was distributed according to sex (see Table #4.11). Male heads of household were predominantly placed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (64.4%), and secondly in trade (11.9%). Female heads of household, on the other hand, were predominantly placed in trade (31.8%), followed by jobs in the services sector (28.2%).

**Table #4.11**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households by sex, by industry**

Industry	Men		Women	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing	69,167	64.4	7,445	21.9
Mining and quarrying	1,342	1.3	23	0.1
Manufacturing industry	5,735	5.3	6,004	17.7
Electricity, gas, and water supply	424	0.4	-	-
Construction	6,573	6.1	-	-
Wholesales and retail trade	12,758	11.9	10,796	31.8
Transport, storage, and communications	3,197	3.0	-	-
Establishments and insurance	1,250	1.2	82	0.2
Community, social, and personal services	6,914	6.4	9,585	28.2
Total	107,360	100.0	33,935	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

This is related to the analysis shown in Table #4.10. The majority of heads of children's households were found in rural areas, and there were many more men than women in this group. Thus, the work of female heads of children's households leaned toward trade, mainly

in urban areas. Another important industry for these women was the services sector, with 28.2% of them concentrated here. Women in general are marginalised in the job market, being relegated to so-called "women's jobs," and consequently receiving lower pay, as will be seen later.

**Table #4.12**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households and working children, by industry**

Industry	Working children		Heads of household	
	Number	%	Number	%
Agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing	140,332	55.4	76,612	54.2
Mining and quarrying	501	0.2	1,365	1.0
Manufacturing industry	28,049	11.1	11,739	8.3
Electricity, gas, and water supply	72	0.0	424	0.3
Construction	6,464	2.6	6,573	4.7
Wholesale and retail trade	51,541	20.4	23,554	16.7
Transport, storage, and communications	4,049	1.6	3,197	2.3
Establishments and insurance	-	-	1,332	0.9
Community, social, and personal services	22,049	8.7	16,499	11.7
Total	253,057	100.0	141,295	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

As can be seen, the most important industry for working children was agriculture, forestry, and fishing. These were practically the primary sources of income, and a tendency for them to be passed from parent to child is noted.

Working children, as already mentioned, were also found in trade and manufacturing, two of the most basic industries after agriculture. The heads of household, however, in addition to trade and manufacturing, were also in the service sector, with an 11.7% of the distribution. In this industry, by observing the percentages, a trend is also noted for jobs to be passed from parent to child.

#### 4.8 How much income is earned by heads of household?

The following chart shows a comparison between the monthly wages earned by heads of working children's households with the income of heads of households of non-working boys and girls. Although wages are low in both groups, certain distinct disadvantages for the latter

group can be observed.

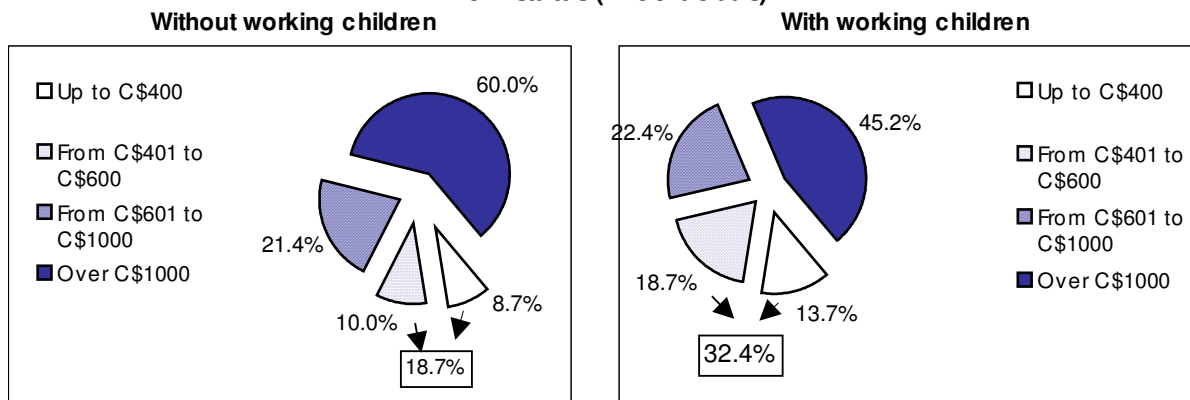
- Whereas 60.0% of the heads of households in the case of children who did not work earned more than C\$1,000 (US\$79) each month, only 45.2% of the other group of heads received such income.

- Whereas only 18.7% of the heads of households of non-working children earned C\$600 (US\$47) or less each month, 32.4% of the other group where working children were present, received such low wages.

- On average, the monthly wages of the heads of households of working children were C\$1,373.05 (US\$108). In the case of heads of households of children between 5 and 17 who did not work, this average was more than 50% higher, being C\$2,111.26 (US\$166)

It is clear that although there were more unemployed heads of household in the case of non-working children, they generally had a higher overall income.

**Chart #4.9**  
Distribution of heads of children's households by monthly income range, by children's work status (in cordobas)



Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB

It must be pointed out that of the 141,245 heads of households where working children were found, 138,688 actually received wages, with 2.0% claiming no income at all.

With respect to income received, as indicated in Table #4.13, a significant number, 45.2%, of heads of working children's households earned less than C\$1000 (US\$79) monthly. However, a

sizeable group (32%) were paid less than C\$600 (US\$47) per month. It must also be noted that salaries in rural areas were evidently lower than those in urban areas; whereas only 24.7% of heads of households in cities were paid wages below C\$600 (US\$47), a total of 36.8% of those in rural areas had to accept these wages, which do not even cover a third of the basic family shopping basket for that year (C\$1,852.37, US\$146).

It is equally important to point out that whereas 55.5% of heads of household in cities were paid C\$1000 (US\$79) or more every month, only 39.3% of those living in the rural sector were. And, while 11.6% of heads of household in cities received at most a monthly pay of C\$400 (US\$32), a higher percentage, 14.9%, had to accept such an income in rural areas.

**Table #4.13**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households by monthly income range, by area of residence (in cordobas)**

Main income	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Up to 400	5,820	11.6	13,183	14.9	19,003	13.7
401 - 600	6,578	13.1	19,398	21.9	25,976	18.7
601 - 1000	9,855	19.7	21,207	23.9	31,062	22.4
More than 1000	27,774	55.5	34,873	39.3	62,647	45.2
Total	50,027	100	88,661	100	138,688	100

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Studying the income received according to the sex of heads of household, it is evident that the schooling level of women does not

translate into higher pay. On the contrary, according to the following table, women were paid less.

**Table #4.14**  
**Distribution of heads of working children's households and working children by sex, by monthly income range (in cordobas)**

Main Income	Head of household				Working child	
	Men		Women		Boys <sup>24</sup>	Girls <sup>25</sup>
	Number	%	Number	%		
Up to 400	9,375	8.9	9,628	29.1	37.3	50.1
401 - 600	18,416	17.4	7,560	22.9	27.7	28.9
601 - 1000	24,190	22.9	6,872	20.8	20.5	15.4
More than 1000	53,630	50.8	9,017	27.3	14.6	5.7
Total	105,611	100.0	33,077	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Two general results are shown in Table #4.14: men tended to earn more than women, regardless of whether the latter were heads of household or working children, and the heads of household earned more than working children.

The trend noted in Table #4.14 allows one to state that the best monthly incomes were earned by male heads of household. On the other hand, the lower the income, the greater the percentage of female heads that received them.

Comparing the income of the heads of

<sup>24</sup> The percentage distribution of wages earned by youngsters is based on the total number of those who declared income: 76,040.

<sup>25</sup> The percentage distribution of wages earned by girls is based on the total number of those who declared income: 25,946.

working children's households with those of the working children themselves, it becomes clear that the latter earned incomes in the lowest ranges. As incomes rose, the number of children earning them fell. On the other hand, working children had the lowest participation in the highest income ranges.

A similar situation was found in the case of female working children. Not only was a marked disadvantage noted in terms of wages earned, but also in the kinds of jobs held. Most girls and women were placed in those positions with the lowest pay, such as found in the service sector.

#### 4.9 How does working children's income relate to that of the heads of household?

A comparative analysis of the income of

all employed members of households with that contributed by working children allows for an evaluation of how valuable the contribution of the latter really was, taking into account the consequent risks and losses in terms of education and recreation of being in the work place at such a young age.

The table below shows some indicators to conduct the comparative analysis of income. The table details information on average monthly wages, average number of family members receiving them, average number of working children, as well as those who did not work. Moreover, these figures allow for a comparison of household situation according to whether the heads of household were employed or not at the time of the survey.

**Table #4.15**  
**Household indicators by head's employment status**

Indicator	Households with unemployed heads	Households with employed heads
Income from the household head's main occupation	-	C\$1,426.8 (US\$112)
Sum of main income of all members	C\$2,259.5 (US\$178)	C\$2,572.5 (US\$203)
Average per person income of those members contributing to the household	C\$914.0 (US\$72)	C\$1,166.6 (US\$92)
Average number of members that received income	2.3	2.4
Average number of working children	1.4	1.5
Average number of working children that contribute an income	0.9	0.6
Average number of working children that do not contribute an income	0.5	1.0
Sum of income of all working children	C\$544.3 (US\$43)	C\$346.8 (US\$27)
Average income of all working children	C\$444.0 (US\$35)	C\$289.4 (US\$23)
Number of households	22,894	141,295

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

Whereas households where the heads were employed, an average monthly income of C\$2572.5 (US\$203) was received, in households where the heads were unemployed, an average monthly income of C\$2259.5 (US\$178) was obtained. If averages are compared according to the person

contributing to the household, among the latter group, where the heads were employed, an average monthly wage of C\$1666.6 (US\$92) was paid, whereas among the latter group, where the heads were unemployed, only C\$914.0 (US\$72) was received on average.

Furthermore, in households where the heads were unemployed, the average amount contributed by working children was C\$544.3 (US\$43) each month, as opposed to those households where the heads were employed, for which the sum was only C\$346.8 (US\$27). These figures show that in households where the heads were not employed, the economic burden fell more on working children.

#### 4.10 What was the composition of working children's households?

When households with at least one working child were compared with those having non-working children between the ages of 5 and 17 years, significant differences emerge, as shown in Table #4.16.

Households of working boys and girls were larger than those where they did

not work. On average, in the former there were 7.1 members, 1.5 members more than in those of non-working children, which had an average of 5.6 members.

This may be indicating not only greater situations of overcrowding and its consequences. This fact is also particularly worrisome when taking into account that the total income of households of working children was lower. While the total income of households of working children was about 20% higher than in households of non-working boys and girls, when comparing the income per capita of those households, the gap reaches more than 50%. That is, income per member in non-working children's households (C\$557.0) was 52.5% higher than that per member in households where at least one boy or girl worked (C\$365.3).

**Table #4.16**  
**Household characteristics by children's work status**

Characteristic	Households with working children	Households without working children	Difference
Average number of members	7.1	5.6	1.5
Persons below 18 years of age	4.1	2.8	1.3
Persons 18 years and over	3.0	2.8	0.2
Mean age of head	46 years	44 years	2 years

Source: ENTIA 2000, MITRAB.

A deeper analysis of the difference in average family size reveals that there are no large differences in the number of adults in each kind of household. In working children's households, an average of 3 adults were found, versus slightly fewer, 2.8, in the other group. The major difference was in the number of children; in working children's households, there were an average of 4.1 children, whereas only 2.8 were reported in the other group, a difference of 1.3 members.

The presence of a larger number of boys and girls means a larger number of dependants per adult in the home. However, as seen earlier, the heads of

households of working children face problems of lower income, often having to work in the informal sector, that is, without benefits, making it more difficult to support their dependants. This implies then that an increased number of members in the household, including children, must contribute economically, whether as unpaid family workers or directly with wages from outside jobs, in order to support the higher number of family members. This combination of lower pay with a high number of household members has to be taken into account as part of the reality of these households when policies and programmes to combat child labour are designed.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The situation outlined in the preceding sections demonstrates the great challenges faced by the Nicaraguan state for the prevention and eradication of child labour and for the protection of working adolescents. It also shows a clear disadvantage in terms of the living conditions for working children and their households, above all in terms of education and income.

Given that child labour has immediate, underlying, and structural causes, solving the challenges demands a national effort in which all sectors play an appropriate role. In light of this, the following aspects are proposed to be taken into consideration in the national policies targeted at solving the child labour problem:

- It is fundamental that there be well-defined policies, programmes, and plans of action, that take into account particular national characteristics. It is urgent that Nicaraguan municipal governments continue to be strengthened, giving priority to those provinces and regions which, according to ENTIA 2000, have the highest incidence of work among children, such as in RAAN, RAAS, Madriz, Jinotega, and Nueva Segovia
- It is necessary to clearly understand that appropriate macroeconomic management constitutes the base on which efficient, sustainable programmes and policies to combat child labour can be developed. This implies taking actions that lead to improving the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the poorest families and those with the fewest resources for raising their children, since, as the results of this survey have shown, working

children are most commonly found among families in precarious socio-economic situations.

- Given the correlation between poverty and the incidence of child labour, actions must be taken to increase the possibility of economic success, with greater emphasis on those parts of the country with the most impoverishment and limitations on economic options. As such, it would be beneficial to manage funds for training and the creation of micro-enterprises, especially in municipalities with the highest rates of poverty and child labour.
- The need for family rehabilitation is also urgent, with an emphasis placed on the role of the family in the education and values of their children, taking the interests of those boys and girls as a point of departure.
- It is crucial that the Ministry of Education continue its process of designing and putting into practice a quality educational programme that guarantees the right to an education for all citizens, especially for boys and girls. Education has a first order impact on the wide-ranging development of children and on breaking the cycle of poverty. The ENTIA 2000 survey has shown that poverty, well-being, living conditions, and schooling are inseparable issues among one another, as well as from child labour.
- The entire Nicaraguan society, and above all, the National Commission for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour (CNEPTI) must promote adequate budgets that guarantee children the right to an education and that guarantee their parents attention through adult and technical education. The ENTIA 2000 survey has clearly shown that the lower educational level parents have, the less likely it will be that their

children attend school, and the most probable it will be that the children begin working at a very young age. In this context, it is necessary that both

children and adults be educated for the prevention and elimination of child labour.

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