

PROJECT INT/00/M62/NET

**“PROMOTING DECENT EMPLOYMENT FOR MIGRANT WOMEN AND
IMPROVED WELFARE FOR THEIR FAMILIES IN NICARAGUA”**

**HOUSEHOLD STUDY OF NICARAGUAN WOMEN WHO HAVE
EMIGRATED TO COSTA RICA SEEKING EMPLOYMENT**

Final Report

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**Prepared by:
Milagros Barahona Portocarrero
National Project Coordinator**

**With assistance from:
Sonia Agurto, Consultant**

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0. INTRODUCTION

0.1 Study Context

The ILO's Gender Program is implementing Projects that are geared toward identifying the existing interrelationships between female employment and child labor, in order to promote national and international policies that generate more and better employment possibilities for women. Such opportunities will also aid women's gradual empowerment, and help reduce and eventually eradicate child labor.

With the "Program to Eliminate Child Labor" (IPEC-ILO) as an antecedent, and following a thorough review of other models developed in Latin America, the International Labour Organization's Gender Promotion Program has begun a pilot project in Nicaragua to "Protect Migrant Women and Improve the Living Conditions of Children Affected by Migration." The pilot phase of the project includes two components: a household survey of migrant women, and direct actions with select target groups from the communities being studied. The Household Study of Migrant Women will be the starting point for this project, giving us a more extensive understanding of the phenomenon of female migration and the relationship between employment, gender relations and relations with children in households affected by migratory processes. It will simultaneously provide a basis for promoting specific medium and long range actions, both within and beyond the scope of this project.

0.2 Project Rationale: Why Migration?

In its effort to identify more and better employment opportunities for women, the Gender Program has identified female labor migration as a growing social phenomenon that needs to be further explored. Presently, we have only a limited understanding about the interrelationships between the economic factors motivating and resulting from the displacement of migrant women and the social and cultural factors that are central to well-being and a quality life, such as gender equity and the conditions that guarantee comprehensive development for these women's children.

Female employment beyond Nicaragua's borders is becoming an increasingly important alternative for entry into the labor market, and as an "escape valve" for highly impoverished families who are unable to satisfy their basic needs.

0.3 Report Content

This report is comprised of five chapters that follow the Introduction. The first chapter clarifies some concepts and definitions used by the study, as well as its methodology and terms of reference. The second presents the national and local contexts vis-a-vis female economic migration as an employment modality, while the third chapter examines the general characteristics of the households and families of women who have emigrated. The fourth chapter presents the objective and subjective conditions of immigrants (most of whom are women) currently working in Costa Rica, as well as some aspects of gender relations within this migratory process. The fifth chapter explores the situation of children in these households, and some aspects of gender inequities in their socialization. Finally, chapter six presents the conclusions and recommendations for policy development and direct intervention.

CHAPTER 1 -Methodology

1.1 Conceptual References

We feel it would be useful to present some conceptual references related to the themes addressed in this study, and to comment on the degree of precision or ambiguity that we find in some of these concepts.

We understand the term "economic migration" or "labor migration" as a social phenomenon that consists of population displacement motivated by two key factors. One of these is the labor force's expulsion from its community of origin, and the other is the degree to which the labor force is attracted to the community where it has migrated. This study is concerned with "external" economic emigration, because the displacement being studied involves moving from one country to another and crossing national borders.

Since this study focuses on the displacement of Nicaraguan women outside of their country, particularly to the neighboring country of Costa Rica, we refer to female emigration and study this phenomenon from the viewpoint of the country of origin. Thus, when we use the term "migrant" we are referring to emigrants, although the same person is, of course, an "immigrant" in Costa Rica.

We understand employment-seeking migration in general, and female migration in particular, as part of the phenomenon of globalization, and particularly of "globalized capitalism." Although the predominant traits of this phenomenon are internationalization and the free movement of capital and assets, it has also been an outgrowth (though to a lesser degree and more selectively) of the need to mobilize the work force in order to confront the pressure of competition. This pressure is resolved primarily through reducing labor costs. It is here, in the context of the open market's interest in a mobile and flexible workforce, that we find an explanation for labor migration, which is generally unregulated and irregular. This irregular labor migration usually occurs between countries with less qualified human resources and countries with expanding economies and/or more qualified human resources. The countries with expanding free market economies have no interest in regulating the work force's free movement. The female emigration being studied here may be characterized as irregular labor migration.

In addressing the theme of economic migration and its relationship to poverty and the development of the "migrant-providing" countries, there are a broad range of interpretations about whether this social phenomenon should be viewed as "neutral" or whether it has positive or negative implications for the displaced populations and the "expelling" communities. These interpretations are based on different conceptions of development, and its requirements. Some authors think that emigration brings modernization and positive results for the subjects who are displaced to other countries in search of better paid and more technically sophisticated work, in more heterogeneous and tolerant cultures. Migration is viewed as an act of individual choice. Others, however, believe that employment-seeking emigration only leads to dependence and social and economic deterioration. The terms that are used vary according to these different conceptions. For example, it is not the same to speak of illegal migrants or irregular migrants, or of the "migrant-providing" country as the country of origin or the expelling country. Each of these terms assumes a distinct conception or ideological approach to the migration phenomenon, and its consequent relationship to general development and human rights.

Evaluating the effect of emigration on the communities of origin requires knowledge about the characteristics and social differences of emigrant populations, and the type of insertion offered by the destination economies and societies as compared to those available in their societies of origin. In order to assess these effects on the displaced population, we must also understand the subjective elements that motivate them and that are derived from these displacements. To what extent can we speak of individual free will among irregular employment-motivated emigration, for instance? These are some of the questions that arise from this study, and which are not answered by the information and analysis it provides.

In a country such as Nicaragua, with its high levels of poverty and social inequality, it is clear that economic emigration--and more concretely family remittances--has become "part of the solution and not part of the problem," as stated recently by an IMF representative. However, in a country concerned with designing and implementing a poverty reduction strategy and with seeking alternatives for sustainable local development, the failure to examine the implications of growing migration would seem contradictory. This migratory flow has obvious implications not only for investments, but also on the development of the nation's human and social capital, which are key elements in an effective strategy for reducing poverty in Nicaragua.

We understand "human capital" as not only the investments in education and health that are made for each of those displaced individuals, but also as the potential application of capacities and energies by each of these people in solving the problems of their communities, and in aiding their economic growth and social development.

By "social capital" we mean the capacity for human relationships, and the cohesion of primary groups such as families. Social capital also signifies organization and reciprocal support from secondary groups such as trade unions and associations, and the values and practices that allow groups, communities and individuals to live in harmony, with collaboration and reciprocal tolerance. The family, therefore, is part of a society's social capital. Social capital also includes institutions that are organized around economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives, carrying out actions for the common good.

In this study, we analyze the households of origin of emigrants to better understand migratory processes in general and female migration in particular. We are not only interested in identifying the socio-economic factors associated with female economic migration, but also the cultural factors that help explain the gender relations that emerge in such a migratory context. As in the case of feminist theory, we stress the importance of the "household" as an arena where family members organize both productive and reproductive work.

Some studies that link theories on different capitalist modes of production with feminist theories refer to the "domestic group" as a unit of analysis that helps us understand not only the meaning of women's salaried and non-salaried work, but also the origin of gender inequities. These studies explain migration as a "strategy of the domestic group, within the context of international capitalism." In this study, we use two terms that approach this conception without actually using the term "domestic group." We use the term "household," which has a similar meaning as that used in surveys of Nicaraguan households, to mean "a domestic group that lives in the same house and eats from the same pot, with one collective budget." And we use the term "family group" to refer to the "domestic group that shares a certain collective strategy for survival or well-being, although it does not live in the same house and does not eat from the same pot." We say "a certain collective strategy for survival or well-being"

because we do not have much empirical evidence about the degree to which decisions made about how income provided by each member of the family group should be complemented and distributed are explicitly stated. The other element that we share with authors who utilize the concept of "domestic groups" is viewing the "family group" as an arena where values and ideas are reproduced, and as a center in which power relations are exercised. We analyze the manner in which these generic power relations define migratory movements, and the decisions that are made about economic contributions from emigrants and all members of this domestic group.¹

1.2 Areas of Study

The sample for the Household Study of Migrant Women was selected from four municipalities in the Departments of Rivas and Carazo, in Nicaragua's Pacific Region. These municipalities are Belén and Rivas, in the Rivas Department, and La Conquista and San Marcos, in the Carazo Department. Although current migration to neighboring Costa Rica comes from all zones of Nicaragua, we know from earlier studies that the two departments selected here have had long histories of migration. It was originally suggested that this pilot project focus its interventions in La Conquista, given its high levels of emigration to Costa Rica. However, when the decision was made to survey a relatively large number of households (200), the pilot project was extended to four municipalities, two large and two small, to provide greater diversity among households.

1.3 Criteria and Procedures for Selecting the Sample

Once the municipalities had been selected, we contacted the women's organization AMNLAE, which has offices and operates in the communities of these municipalities. We requested assistance in identifying households where at least one woman had migrated to Costa Rica in search of employment. We also added the criteria that this female member of the household remain outside of the country for relatively long periods of time (more than days at a time) to exclude merchants who come and go to Costa Rica, but whose permanent residence is still in Nicaragua. In this manner, we compiled a list of approximately 350 households with these basic traits. Although poverty levels within the selected households were not specified, the requirement that a female had emigrated due to economic reasons assumed the exclusion of non-poor households.

1.4 Data Collection Techniques

Both secondary information and primary information have been used in preparing this report. In other words, some of the most common quantitative and qualitative techniques were used, such as:

- Bibliographic reviews of other studies directly related to this theme,
- Application of a questionnaire in 202 households,
- Individual interviews,
- Group interviews of key sources,

¹ Gregorio Gil, Carmen, 1998. "Migración Femenina. Su impacto en las relaciones de género". Madrid. Narcea. "Las Relaciones de Género dentro de los procesos migratorios, ¿reproducción o cambio?", 1996, by the same author, in Maquieira, Virginia and Vara, Ma. Jesús. Eds. *Género, clase y etnia en los nuevos procesos de globalización*. IUEM. Madrid.

- Feedback sessions and analysis of results with some of the members of surveyed households.

1.5 Information Processing

The questionnaire was applied in 202 households of Migrant Women (which we will call MW Households). Its design was based on a questionnaire originally used by the ILO's Gender Program in Geneva, and was adapted to a format of household surveys and tested during a trial run in the zones to be studied. A database with the SPSS program was also designed for registering and processing the survey results. Researcher Sonia Agurto, a consultant to this project, was responsible for redesigning and applying the survey and processing its results. Both she and the Project Coordinator jointly analyzed the results.

The Project Coordinator obtained and analyzed the study's qualitative information through conducting individual interviews and focus groups both before and after the survey, as well as via collective discussions held during the presentation of the survey's findings to some of its respondents, local public authorities and women's leaders from the municipalities where the survey's sample came from.

Some of the qualitative information that was jointly obtained with a team hired by the ILO for the study on "institutional initiatives to protect female emigrant laborers and the practices of migrants themselves" was also integrated into this report.

1.6 Problems Encountered

Once the project was underway, we realized that much more weight had been placed on obtaining quantitative information about the conditions of households than on qualitative information about perceptions, values and practices. This could have been calibrated somewhat through reducing the quantitative information (characterization) on the survey form, and including more questions aimed at obtaining more subjective information about female migration and its effects. The survey form became extremely long, despite the elimination of some of the themes that had originally been included. Greater importance could have been given to qualitative techniques, such as focal groups and collective discussion sessions.

Some of the constraints related to subjective aspects will be overcome during implementation of project actions, through two key routes. The first is through obtaining feedback and discussing results with the different stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in migratory processes. The second way will consist of a training and awareness component, since we propose using the initial sessions as a starting point for identifying the knowledge, beliefs and practices of each group's participants in relation to each theme addressed and their interrelationships with migration.

1.7 Terms of Reference for the MW Household Survey

The following objectives are proposed for the MW Household Survey:

General Objective:

Conduct a survey to study the general characteristics and gender and inter-generational relations in households where female members of the family group have emigrated to

Costa Rica in search of employment and income generating opportunities to support their family's survival.

Specific Objectives :

- Develop a database with quantitative information about the households of migrant women.
- Develop a descriptive report about the main variables that affect the living conditions and interpersonal relations of family groups in which women have migrated, and about the main interrelationships between different variables.

Specific Tasks

To achieve these objectives, the Consultant will carry out the following tasks:

1. Jointly plan all activities related to organizing and implementing the study together with the Project Coordinator in Managua.
2. Review and adjust the questionnaire designed by the ILO-Geneva, so that it responds to the study's specific objectives and the conditions of the selected population.
3. Hire personnel with the required qualifications and experience for each of the tasks that need to be carried out (application of household questionnaires, supervision of pollsters, correction of questionnaires, design of SPSS database for registering information, processing information, preparation of report).
4. Organize training workshop for pollsters about understanding and using the questionnaire.
5. Conduct a trial run of the questionnaire and subsequently adjust it.
6. Coordinate and supervise all work related to applying the questionnaire and processing its data.
7. Prepare and present a descriptive report about the main findings.
8. Carry out any other tasks related to guaranteeing the survey's organization and implementation.

Work Methodology

The objectives of the survey, outlined below, provide the main reference point for the work methodology:

General Objective

Obtain an understanding of the general characteristics and relation dynamics in households where female members of the family group have emigrated to Costa Rica in search of employment and income generating opportunities to support their family's survival.

Specific Objectives

1. Gain a more precise understanding of the socio-economic conditions of poor households in which a female member of the family group has emigrated to Costa Rica in search of employment or income.
2. Gain a better understanding of the interrelationships that exist between migration and better employment or income for migrant women, and improved income for the family group.
3. Gain a better understanding about the gender relations and relations between adults and children in family groups with female members who have emigrated.
4. Gain a better understanding about the interrelationships between female economic migration and the well being and development of children in the same family group.
5. Gain a more precise understanding of the conditions and nature of irregular economic emigration, which increases migrant women's vulnerability to discrimination and exploitation.

The questionnaire will be applied to sources in 200 households located in the La Conquista and San Marcos municipalities in the Carazo Department, and the Rivas and Belén municipalities in the Rivas Department. These households will be selected from a sample of 360 households that were pre-selected by grassroots leaders of the women's organization AMNLAE, based on meeting the criteria of having one or more female members of the family group working in Costa Rica (the majority of these women work as domestic employees in homes in San Jose). The trial run of the questionnaire will take place in one of the selected communities.

CHAPTER 2. National and Local Context

2.1. Socio-Demographic Context

2.1.1 The Country

Nicaragua is the largest but least densely populated of the six Central American nations. The last National Census (1995) indicated a total population of 4,357,099 inhabitants, with 54.4% located in urban zones; 49.43% of the population is male and 50.57% female. One quarter of the population lives in the Managua Department.

Nicaragua's population is very young. The Standard of Living Measurement Survey of 1998 (EMNV98) found that 42% of the population is younger than 15 years of age, and 21% are between 15-24 years of age.

Most of the population and most of the nation's economic infrastructure are concentrated in the Pacific coastal region. In contrast, the Atlantic Region is sparsely populated and very isolated from the rest of the country, in one of this country's most important historical imbalances.

Nicaragua's Pacific and Central regions are divided politically and administratively into 14 Departments, and there are three more regions in the Atlantic zone, for a total of 17 political/administrative divisions.

2.1.2 The Sample Municipalities and Departments

The municipalities where the sample of households were studied--Rivas, Belén, San Marcos and La Conquista--are located in the Rivas and Carazo Departments, both of which are situated in the Pacific region. Current data about the total population of each municipality is not available, but data from the 1995 Census of the two departments and four municipalities is described below.

The total population of the Rivas Department is approximately 140,432 inhabitants, most of which live in rural areas. The department is divided into 10 municipalities: Rivas, Altagracia, Belén, Buenos Aires, Cárdenas, Moyogalpa, Potosí, San Jorge, San Juan del Sur, and Tola, many of which share a border with Costa Rica. Economic activities are mainly agriculture and extensive livestock production. Crops include basic grains, plantains and sugar cane. Fishing and tourism are also important to local economies, and have potential for the future. Industry and commerce are incipient, and both small scale.

To the north, the Pan-American Highway links Rivas with the Granada, Carazo and Managua departments, and to the south with the border town of Peñas Blancas, Costa Rica.

The capital of the Rivas Municipality is the City of Rivas, which is also the departmental capital and the fifth most important city in the nation. It is located some 111 kilometers from Managua. Two universities operate in Rivas. One is the School of Agriculture, which has trained high level technicians for the past thirty years, and a regional center of the Polytechnic University (UPOLI) that was set up in the 1990s and offers Humanities and Commercial Science programs.

The Belén Municipality is located 12 kilometers from the City of Rivas, and its urban center has direct access to the Pan-American Highway.

The Carazo Department has a population of 149,407 inhabitants and is mainly urban. It is divided into eight municipalities: Jinotepe, Diriamba, San Marcos, Dolores, El Rosario, La Paz de Oriente, Santa Teresa, and La Conquista. The Departmental capital is located in Jinotepe.

Carazo has a good infrastructure of paved highways and year-round roads that link it with nearby, densely populated cities. The main economic activity is coffee production, along with sugar cane and citrus production. In zones located closer to the coast, basic grain and livestock production predominates. Small-scale fishing takes place in the main beach towns.

San Marcos is one of the main municipalities of the Carazo Department, and its capital is located 45 kilometers from Managua.

In 1992, a foreign center of a U.S. university was set up here, through an agreement with the Municipal Council. The university has helped project this municipality, and generate a range of service activities.

La Conquista is very sparsely populated, and most of the population resides in rural zones. The urban center is well connected to the rest of the cities of Carazo and Rivas via a recently paved highway, but transportation services are insufficient and irregular. The survey was applied in the municipality's urban section.

Industry and trade in these four municipalities mainly consists of small businesses and small scale activities, such as coffee processing, bakeries, small shops, tailors, pharmacies, carpentry workshops, bars, mills, restaurants, butchers, mechanics, building materials, motels, gasoline stations and hardware shops. There was a sugar refinery in Rivas that was an important source of male employment, but it closed one year ago due to financial problems.

The following government institutions operate in the cities of Rivas and San Marcos: Telecommunications, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Family, the Nicaraguan Electricity Institute, the National Police, local Courts, the Supreme Electoral Council, the Red Cross, the Ministry of Labor, and the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute.

Total Population, rural-urban and by gender 1995 Census						
Department	Municipality	Urban Population	Rural Population	Total inhabitants	Male	Female
Rivas		34.3%	65.7%	140,432		
	Belén	2,101	14,867	16,968	51.17%	48.83%
	Rivas	22,255	16,465	38,720	48.56%	51.44%
Carazo		57.3%	42.7%	149,407		
	La Conquista	823	2,465	3,288	51.50%	48.50%
	San Marcos	10,053	15,468	25,521	49.39%	50.61%

The Municipal Council

The Municipal Council is the highest local government authority, charged with local public administration. The Council is responsible for establishing the main guidelines for municipal public administration, in relation to the municipality's economic, political and social affairs. The Municipal Council is made up of five Council Members and Five Substitutes who are elected every four years. In November 2000, municipal elections for all of the nation's municipal authorities were held, and these officials took office in January 2001. The Municipal Councils in Rivas and San Marcos also include technical personnel who support municipal administration. This personnel is hired on the basis of the income available in each municipality, generated almost solely by taxes and commercial license fees, since transfers from the central government (no fixed amounts or percentages are established by law) have been the object of difficult negotiations with unfavorable results for the municipalities.

2.2 The National Socio-Economic Context

2.2.1 Poverty

According to the "poverty profile" and poverty lines constructed in 2000, on the basis of consumption (using the World Bank's methodology), some 47.9% of Nicaraguans are poor, and 17.3% of these are categorized as extremely poor.² Other recent studies using combined methods for measuring poverty indicate that three quarters or more of this nation's total population live in poverty

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP), using the 1993 and 1998 Standard of Living Measurement Surveys, indicates that poverty and extreme poverty are predominantly rural phenomena. However, during this period there was a slight reduction in rural poverty, while urban poverty tended to increase.

On the basis of a poverty analysis, the Government has designed a Poverty Reduction Strategy. This strategy has four key components: 1) widespread growth, with emphasis on generating productive employment and rural development; 2) more and better investment in human capital among the poor population; 3) greater protection to vulnerable population groups; and 4) strengthening institutions and governability. Development of this Strategy was an essential requirement for Nicaragua's qualification as a HIPC (highly indebted poor country) nation, and thereby qualify for debt elimination by the Group of 5. The first version of this Strategy has undergone national and sector-wide consults, and the Government is expected to present a second version to financial institutions (IMF, WB and IDB) by mid-2001, to continue negotiations on its funding.

National discussions about poverty and the Government's strategy have come up against two recurring criticisms. The first is the manner in which poverty has been measured, which greatly underestimates the seriousness of the situation, and the second is that the Strategy not only leaves the structural adjustment program intact, but also strengthens it. Moreover, the Poverty Reduction Strategy's analysis fails to address the phenomenon of migration, both internal and external.

² Interim Strengthened Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, (PRSP) Government of Nicaragua, July 24, 2000. This is considered the last official version of the Strategy, and it is being discussed by both the government and civil society through the National NGO Coordinator, or CCER.

In addition, although the first version of the Strategy refers to gender inequities (illustrated in the form of income gaps, teenage pregnancies and high levels of family and sexual violence), it fails to provide a differentiated gender analysis of the structural adjustment program's impact, nor does it propose any concrete actions to improve women's access to economic resources such as credit, land and technical assistance.

2.2.2 Employment and Income Nationwide

The public policies applied during the previous decade were guided by the conditions of the structural adjustment program, which emphasized reductions in public spending and credit, frozen wages, and the deregulation of trade, capital and labor. All of these policies have generated drastic changes in the labor market, increasing its "informalness" and instability. One of the most evident consequences has been the increased participation of women and children in the labor market. This has been a common tendency throughout Latin America.

Women's participation in the economically active population has increased notably. While women constituted 33% of Nicaragua's labor force in 1993, this percentage rose to 42% in 2000. Female participation reaches 46% in urban zones, while it is 38% in rural zones.³

The commerce and services sectors continue to grow, and provide the largest source of urban and female employment. Although open unemployment rates have dropped to as low as 10%, women's entry into "under-employment activities" has increased. Most women joining the EAP do so through informal activities, which tend to be low-paid with long hours.

The male bias of economic policies has been well documented in different studies. The main findings of such studies indicate that reduced public spending has transferred greater responsibilities to women, particularly with respect to primary health care and preschool education. Moreover, the reduction in formal sector jobs due to cuts in the state apparatus, privatization, or the recession of economic activities has been accompanied by the myth that informal activities--particularly small scale enterprises and self-employment--offer viable employment options.

Nonetheless, research by the International Foundation for Global Economic Development (FIDEG) shows that over the past nine years, the economic crisis affecting the labor market has led to the systematic return to salaried jobs and a reduction in self-employment. When we speak of self-employment, we are referring to establishments with generally only one or two employees, in other words functioning at the survival level, and which frequently fail due to a lack of clientele and drops in of currency circulation levels.

FIDEG's research also shows that women account for a larger percentage of the self-employed, and they mostly carry out economic activities at home. In fact, one of the most important economic strategies used by women involves utilizing the home for productive activities, thereby combining domestic work with remunerated activities.

Nicaraguan laws guarantee equal pay for equal work, regardless of an individual's gender. However, such laws have not eliminated the enormous salary differences between men and women.

³ FIDEG's surveys and studies on gender and the labor market.

Cultural attitudes that undervalue women's work continue to prevail. Thus, inadequate employment opportunities force thousands of women to enter the labor market at a disadvantage in relation to men. In fact, women do not receive the same salaries as men. Data collected by FIDEG demonstrate that women's average salaries are 36% lower than men's salaries. A recent GTZ-supported study about public employees (1999) indicated that women employed by the state receive salaries as much as 250% lower than men, in similar public employment posts.

The main source of employment in Nicaragua are the so called "Free Trade Zones" which are mostly clothing assembly factories for export that employ young women. These businesses continuously violate national and international labor norms (ILO Conventions), which has generated a high level of opposition and has led to mediation by the trade union movement and the "Maria Elena Cuadra" Unemployed Women's Movement.

Therefore, although open unemployment rates are not high, problems related to low productivity--especially in the agriculture and service sectors--and limited salaried incomes reflect the under-utilization of human capital, as a key factor affecting this nation's development.

2.2.3 Women's Economic Contribution

Although national statistics underestimate women's contribution to the national economy, and most of this support is not even quantified in national accounts, FIDEG data clearly demonstrates the productive and reproductive contribution of Nicaraguan women.

In the productive sphere, women were responsible for some 40% of the wealth produced in Nicaragua in 1995 (GNP). Their contribution to different economic sectors may be broken down as follows:

- * 24% of agricultural production
- * 33% of livestock production
- * 47% of industrial production
- * 48% of commercial production

In the "reproductive" sphere, if women's domestic work were assigned its true value, it would signify a contribution of some US\$500 million annually.

What does this contribution actually signify?

- It is equal to 80% of Nicaragua's total exports in 1995.
- It is equal to 85% of the total international aid received by Nicaragua in 1995.
- It is more than the Ministry of Finances collected in the form of taxes in 1995.
- It is more than the total public and private investments made in Nicaragua in 1995.
- It is more than six times the amount that the government spends on its Education and Health budgets.
- It would be the equivalent of more than C\$1,000 paid to every Nicaraguan woman and man.

The incorporation of more women into informal economic activities has not been fortuitous or accidental. Rather, it has been the outcome of a depressed economy that does not offer opportunities for entering more dynamic sectors of the economy, where women could develop their technical capacities and fulfill their salary needs. Many

women are obligated to seek out any kind of work available, due to the urgent pressure to obtain income for meeting their family's most pressing needs. This would make them appear more "versatile" than men, but in reality such flexibility is due to their responsibility (usually unshared) for guaranteeing their family's economic survival, leaving their own aspirations for personal development by the wayside, along with their social status.

2.2.4 Child Labor

As already mentioned, increased child labor is one consequence of economic recession and the rise in poverty that has been accentuated by structural adjustment programs. These programs, which drastically reduce public spending, have not been accompanied by any counterbalancing social measures that would keep the poor from suffering most from the strict macro-economic fiscal and monetary restrictions.

A legal framework for protecting the rights of children, adolescents and youth exists in Nicaragua. These laws promote their right to adequate conditions for development, and assign the family the obligation of protecting young people from labor exploitation. However, a large gap exists between this legal framework and institutional practices, both on the part of state institutions and the family itself as the main arena for children's socialization and care.

The key elements in this legal framework include: the Constitution of the Republic, the Child and Adolescent Code (in force since 1998), the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Nicaragua is a signatory nation), the National Policy on Comprehensive Care for Children and Adolescents, the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (1997-2001), and the Strengthened Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Child labor is accepted to such an extent as a necessary reality and even natural phenomenon that national statistics systems (National Census, Household Surveys, etc.) include children as young as 10 years of age in calculations of the EAP. The Child Code itself, recognizing the real situation in Nicaragua, includes work regulations for children aged 14 and above.

In countries such as Nicaragua, it is difficult to know the conditions and extent of child labor, because a certain "poverty culture" reinforces factors associated with objective need, with more subjective cultural factors such as a parent's desire to have more children to guarantee a larger family work force for productive activities, or the idea that children "learn more through working" than by going to school. In general, both parents and private employers hide the fact that children are working, and even the children themselves are unaware that what they are doing to "help out" is actually work.

Recently, with support from UNICEF and the IPEC-ILO, the Ministry of Labor has begun to develop important initiatives for detecting and regulating child labor that takes place under high-risk or exploitative conditions. The results of a household survey about the prevalence of child labor nationwide are expected in August of this year.

Finally, it is worth calling attention to a hopeful sign, which is the fact that the Poverty Reduction Strategy's diagnostic study identifies child labor as a factor that actually increases the vulnerability of poor people.

2.2.5 Migration in Nicaragua

Historically, Nicaragua has been a nation with a negative net migration. The national statistics system--the 1995 Census and nationwide household surveys--does not register this phenomenon. Given the characteristics of the migration phenomenon, it is generally accepted that calculations of the number of Nicaraguans living abroad are greatly under-estimated.

Although methodological problems and deficiencies in national statistics make it difficult to calculate the emigrant population, various studies indicate that it is a growing phenomenon (FLASCO and others).

In periodic surveys about the socio-economic situation in the main Pacific-region cities, FIDEG has detected an increase in the number of households with members who have emigrated. FIDEG has detected an increased dependency upon family remittances sent by family members living abroad, from 19% in 1992 to almost 40% of households in 1999 (Fonseca, 1997; Agurto, 1999).

The National Statistics and Census Bureau (INEC) has attempted to obtain information about the phenomenon through including a section on migration in its Demographics and Health Survey (ENDESA 98). Although this module did not obtain any realistic data (supposedly only 4.2% of the nation's total population is living abroad), it did acquire information about the characteristics of migrants. More realistic estimates indicate that close to one million Nicaraguans are seeking better opportunities outside of their country, representing approximately 20% of the nation's total population. Data gleaned from the ENDESA survey,⁴ and which has been confirmed by other studies,⁵ indicate the following:

- The destination countries of preference are the United States and Costa Rica.
- Migrants are young people, between 15 and 30-40 years of age. The average age of male migrants is 31 years, and females are an average 34 years of age.
- The gender distribution of Nicaraguan migrants is 51% male and 49% female.
- Young people and the better-educated feel a greater impetus to emigrate.
- The greater the education, the further away the destination. Those with higher education levels head to the United States, while those with lower education levels migrate to Costa Rica.
- Women emigrate to the countries of further distance (US, Canada, South America), and also have higher educational levels. The reason for this is not known, but it is hypothesized that women's motivations are not only linked to seeking opportunities, but also to stable relationships with people residing abroad (they either follow their husbands, or remain abroad after marrying someone there).⁶
- There is more information available about emigration to the United States, and less about emigration to Costa Rica (more undocumented migrants).
- Those emigrating to Costa Rica have an average of 1-9 years of studies (70% of men, 66% of women).
- In Costa Rica, 32% of male Nicaraguan immigrants work in agriculture/livestock activities, 15% in commercial activities, and 13% in personal services. Among women, 52% work in "personal services" (as domestic employees), and 32% in commercial activities.

⁴ "Nicaragüenses en el Exterior," National Statistics and Census Bureau, United Nations Population Fund. Managua, September 1999.

⁵ Morales and Cranshaw, Flasco; Pritchard, UNDP.

⁶ "Nicaragüenses en el Exterior," pg. 7.

- The reasons for emigrating are linked to the lack of employment opportunities and economic problems at home. It is believed that:
 - ✓ *“The first to migrate is the family's most enterprising member, with the highest level of education and the most adventurous spirit.”*
- The non-migrating population is much younger than the migrating population, with an average age of 24 years vs. 32 years.
- More men migrate than women. There are 105 men for each 100 women among the migrant population, whereas this ratio is 95 men for every 100 women among the national population.
- Women are more educated, both among migrant and non-migrant populations.
- The Departments with the highest percentages of their populations migrating are Managua, Chinandega, León, Granada, Rivas, Masaya and the RAAS. Some six percent of all Nicaraguans living abroad come from Rivas.
- Emigration to Costa Rica is a relatively recent phenomenon. Some 58% of those who left for the United States did so prior to 1990, while 78% of Nicaraguans residing in Costa Rica went there after 1993.
- FLACSO's most recent studies indicate an increase in female migratory labor, particularly to Costa Rica. It is estimated that 42% of this emigration takes the form of domestic labor.
- Nicaragua's Human Development Report for 2000 indicates that of Nicaraguans seeking Migratory Amnesty in Costa Rica (1999, following Hurricane Mitch), some 54% were men and 46% women.

Labor emigration should be understood, therefore, in the context of "expelling" factors in Nicaragua combined with the "attraction" factors in Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan economy's stagnation means an under-utilization of the work force, while Costa Rica's dynamic economy and the pressure of seeking higher levels of international competitiveness allow absorption of the immigrant labor force which, due to being undocumented and irregular, can be hired at lower cost and is unregulated by the labor codes of either of these nations.

CHAPTER 3. Characteristics of the Households of Female Migrant Laborers

3.1 Number of households and their rural-urban distribution, by municipality

A total of 202 homes were visited, and information about one household and one family group were obtained from each dwelling. These were distributed in different Departments and Municipalities as follows:

Municipality * Department Cross Tabulation

Count		Department		Total
		Rivas	Carazo	
Municipality	Belén	44		44
	Rivas	102		102
	La Conquista		24	24
	San Marcos		32	32
Total		146	56	202

Rural homes were visited in the Rivas and Belén Municipalities (in the Rivas Department). The following table details the urban-rural distribution of all the surveyed homes, by Department and Municipality:

Total Homes Surveyed

		Department		Total
		Rivas	Carazo	
		%	%	%
Zone	Urban	49.0%	100.0%	63.2%
	Rural	51.0%		36.8%

		Zone	
		Urban	Rural
Municipality	Belén	15.9%	84.1%
	Rivas	63.4%	36.6%
	La Conquista	100.0%	
	San Marcos	100.0%	
Total		63.2%	36.8%

3.2 Households and the number of people per dwelling or home

It was possible to have more than one "household" per dwelling, understanding household as groups of people who cook and eat together. We therefore assume that these are relatively independent socio-economic groupings. Dwellings with just one household predominated, yet some 10% of dwellings had more than one household.

The number of people per dwelling, however, was not consistent:

- 17% of homes had 1-3 people.
- 45% of the homes had 4-6 people living in them.

- The remaining 38% had 7-23 people.

There were an average of 6-7 people per dwelling, which is slightly above the national average.⁷ The mode --in other words, the most frequently repeated number-- is five people per dwelling. Given that these are poor urban homes, we may estimate that more than one third are living in overcrowded conditions.

There were a total of 1,290 people in the dwellings visited, and 1,179 in the studied households or family groups from whom information was obtained. This difference may be explained by the fact that 19 dwellings were found that had more than one household or family group, but where the surveyed individual only supplied information about the members of his or her own family group.

3.3 Composition of heads of household, by age and gender

We find a direct association between female migration and family groups of origin headed by females. More than half of these households are headed by women (55%), which is much higher than the percentage of female-headed households nationwide (approximately ¼ of rural homes, and 1/3 of urban households). These heads of household are most frequently between the ages of 41-60, or over 60 years of age. Seventy-nine percent are over 41 years of age. We found 3 heads of household younger than 18 years of age, most likely older daughters who are responsible for younger siblings.

The marital status of heads of household varied a great deal according to gender. The majority of female heads of household (72%) were single (separated, divorced, widowed or single), while most male heads of household were either married or living with a partner (90%).

Marital Status	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
	Col %	Col %	Col %
Married	49.5%	8.0%	26.6%
With a partner	40.7%	19.6%	29.1%
Separated/divorced	2.2%	43.8%	25.1%
Widowed	3.3%	25.9%	15.8%
Single	4.4%	2.7%	3.4%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

3.4 Composition of household members, by age and gender

Females and young people predominated in the sample households. Almost half of all family members were 18 years of age or younger. Some 54% were female and 46% male. This difference is significantly higher than among general population nationally.⁸

⁷ The 98 Standard of Living Measurement Study (EMNV98) reported an average 5.4 members per household nationally, and 5.5 in the Pacific region. Among rural households, the national average was 5.7.

⁸ ENDESA 98 found 48% males and 52% females. The 1998 Standard of Living Measurement Study found 49% males and 51% females.

Percentage by Age Group

		%
Age groups	0-5	12.5%
	6-12	20.6%
	13-18	16.5%
	19-25	13.1%
	26-40	14.6%
	41-60	12.0%
	61 or more	10.9%

		%
Sex	Male	45.9%
	Female	54.1%

If we analyze the age groups, we find more males among the 0-12 year age group. By age 13, the female to male ratio by age group begins to increase, reaching a notable difference as of 41 years of age and even more so among the more elderly population.

This age to gender relationship leads us to first question the whereabouts of girls under age 12, or why is there a considerably larger percentage of boys than girls in this age group. One explanation could be a higher rate of female child mortality, although ENDESA 98 data on infant mortality and child mortality during the ten years prior to the survey indicate higher mortality rates among males aged 0-5 years.⁹

Another question is why does this relationship invert beginning with 13 year olds. Among 13-18 year olds, 44% are male and 56% female, and in the following group the proportion of men in relation to women decreases even more. Can we presume that 13 years of age marks the point in which boys either leave or are separated from the family group to begin working, emigrating either within or outside of the country for this purpose? The explanation for their separation from the family group may be due to their enrollment in a high school outside of their community of origin, although high schools exist in all of the municipalities where the survey was applied. Moreover, the proportion of females reaching high school is actually higher than males.

		Sex	
		Male	Female
		Row %	Row %
Age groups	0-5	53.7%	46.3%
	6-12	52.3%	47.7%
	13-18	43.8%	56.2%
	19-25	42.9%	57.1%
	26-40	48.8%	51.2%
	41-60	40.4%	59.6%
	61 or more	33.6%	66.4%
Total		45.9%	54.1%

If we analyze the age proportions by gender, we find a younger male population than female. This coincides with national statistics that indicate that females have a higher life expectancy than males.

⁹ IBID, Table 7.3, pg. 127.

		Sex	
		Male	Female
		Col %	Col %
Age groups	0-5	14.6%	10.7%
	6-12	23.5%	18.2%
	13-18	15.7%	17.1%
	19-25	12.2%	13.8%
	26-40	15.5%	13.8%
	41-60	10.5%	13.2%
	61 or more	7.9%	13.3%
Total		100.0%	100.0%

3.5 Marital Status

The proportions of people according to marital status are presented below. Adolescents between 16-18 years of age are included here, since it is possible that individuals in this age group are already forming family groups. It is noteworthy that marital status varies greatly according to gender.

		Sex	
		Male	Female
		%	I %
Marital status	Married	25.3%	18.5%
	With a partner	27.4%	20.2%
	Separated/divorced	8.0%	29.2%
	Widowed	1.7%	9.5%
	Single	37.5%	22.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%

A larger proportion of males than females are married or with partners. The difference in percentages--20%--is notable. While half of the males in these family groups are married or living with partners, only 39% of females are married or with partners. However, since the absolute number of women is larger than the number of men, there is actually very little difference. Only a small number of the partners of these men (8%) are outside of the family group, working as emigrant laborers.

While almost one third of women are either separated or divorced, only 8% of men are in this category. Thirty-seven percent of men are reported as single, versus 22.7% of women.

We can, therefore, associate female emigration with a high proportion of separated/divorced women in the households of origin of these emigrants.

Out of the four studied municipalities, La Conquista has the highest relative rate of female migration.

3.6 Educational Levels

We find good educational levels among the family groups studied, in comparison to national statistics. Excluding children younger than 6 years of age, we find that most of the surveyed population has concluded some or all of their primary education, while almost one third has either attended or concluded high school.

		Col %
Educ. level	None	10.4%
	Primary	55.4%
	Secondary	28.9%
	University	3.5%
	Technical Educ.	1.1%
	Literate	0.8%
Total		100.0%

(Children younger than 6 years of age have been excluded).

The educational levels among the studied population are comparatively higher than national averages, and the averages of their respective Departments. The last Human Development Report found that 31% of the national population is illiterate. According to ENDESA98, 23% of males and 22% of females over 6 years of age had no formal education whatsoever, with greater proportions found among 6-9 year olds and those over 45 years of age. In the ENDESA data broken down by Departments (its data is not segregated by municipality), we find that 25% of the male population and 18% of the female population over 6 years of age in the Rivas Department had no education. In Carazo, 16% of males and 17% of females in this age range had no education.

		Age Groups					
		6-12	13-18	19-25	26-40	41-60	61 or more
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
Educ. level	None	7.5%	1.0%	2.0%	8.1%	12.1%	41.4%
	Primary	87.6%	42.8%	28.8%	39.5%	66.0%	55.5%
	Secondary	5.0%	54.1%	55.6%	41.9%	15.6%	0.8%
	University		2.1%	13.1%	5.8%	1.4%	
	Technical Educ			0.7%	4.7%	1.4%	
	Literate					3.5%	2.3%

Among children 6-12 years of age, school attendance levels are essentially normal, with 87.6% enrolled in primary school.¹⁰ However, among adolescents (13-18 years of age) we find that almost 43% are still in primary school. The lowest educational levels are found among the population over 41 years of age, along with high levels of illiteracy. This situation inevitably affects the manner in which children are raised and socialized, since most heads of household are grandmothers and grandfathers over 41 years of age.

Women have slightly higher educational levels than men do. Almost one third of women have attended or concluded high school. This slight educational advantage among women is consistent with national tendencies.

¹⁰ Both the ENDESA 98 Demographic and Health Study and the Ministry of Education report that approximately 75% of children in this age range are attending school

		Sex	
		Male	Female
		Col %	Col %
Educ. Level	None	10.2%	10.6%
	Primary	59.7%	51.9%
	Secondary	25.8%	31.3%
	University	3.0%	3.9%
	Technical	0.4%	1.6%
	Literate	0.9%	0.7%

The two following tables present data about the number of years dedicated to studies. Once again, we find that women have spent more time studying than men have.

		Col %
Years studying	Less than 2	16.1%
	2 to 6	50.8%
	7 to 10	23.3%
	11 to 14	8.3%
	More than 14	1.6%

		Sex	
		Male	Female
		Col %	Col %
Years studying	Less than 2	17.1%	15.3%
	2 to 6	53.9%	48.2%
	7 to 10	22.1%	24.2%
	11 to 14	5.4%	10.7%
	More than 14	1.5%	1.6%

If we explore the reasons why studies were discontinued, we find that economic reasons prevail, and have affected women more than men. A relatively higher proportion of men are currently studying.

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
Reasons for not continuing studies	The school only reached this grade.	0.9%		0.4%
	Parents did not want him/her to continue studying.	2.6%	5.2%	4.0%
	Economic reasons; they were too poor.	22.6%	32.6%	28.0%
	Because began working to help sustain family.	9.6%	3.7%	6.4%
	There was no school, or it was very far away.	7.0%	14.1%	10.8%
	Is currently studying.	47.8%	39.3%	43.2%
	Other, specify	7.0%	4.4%	5.6%
	Did not respond.	0.7%	0.7%	1.6%

Other studies about migration indicate a tendency toward higher educational levels among the migrating population than the national population, and that the higher the educational level the greater the distance that individuals migrate (those with higher school levels go to the USA, while those with less education migrate to Costa Rica). Therefore, on the one hand this study apparently confirms the hypothesis that more education favors migration. In addition, we may assume that due to both higher educational levels and the opportunities created by migration, the children of these families will obtain more education. The relative importance of a mother's or father's educational level and migration, as factors influencing the level of education a child will obtain, remains to be seen. It is likely that education acts as both a factor contributing to migration, and is a positive result of migration.

Other related data may be found in the 1999-2000 Costa Rican Ombudsman Report, which indicates that the educational levels of Nicaraguan immigrants have improved during the 1984-1997 period, that the number of immigrants has doubled, and that there has been a greater increase in female immigrants. In other words, higher educational levels are in large part due to the fact that a higher percentage of immigrants are women, who generally have higher educational levels than men have.

3.7 Place of Origin and Residence

The members of households that were studied are mostly of urban origin (78.2%). If we compare the zone of origin with the zone of current residence, we find that very few have changed their place of residence. Those who have, in fact, changed their residence have done so for family reasons, rather than economic reasons. In other words, this population has experienced relatively little internal migration.

3.8 Employment and Main Activities

Almost half of those between 15 and 64 years of age¹¹ in the households studied have employment, with a greater percentage of males working than females. Only 1/3 of women report that they are employed. This is partly explained by the fact that those interviewed do not view domestic work as a type of work. The surveyed households in Rivas reported slightly more than half of people working, whereas there were more unemployed in La Conquista. When differentiated by gender, we find that females from Belén have the lowest levels of employment (remunerated work, that is). This is logical, given that this municipality is almost completely rural. Nationally, rural women have the lowest employment rates, although they contribute significantly to production for family consumption and have the longest "domestic work days" given their precarious living conditions (the need to transport water, collect firewood, etc.).

If people work, they generally help support family consumption. This is true of both men and women; differences in the amount and frequency of their contribution were not examined.

The following tables include people between the ages of 15-64.

¹¹ This age range was established because the Child Code of Nicaragua specifies regulations for some types of work beginning at age 14, although all national statistics include the population between 10-64 years in calculating the economically active population. The age of retirement is 65 years.

Employed?	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	Col %
	Col %	Col %	
Working	71.5%	32.8%	49.3%
Not working	28.5%	67.2%	50.7%

Belén Municipality

Employed?	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	Col %
	Col %	Col %	
Rows			
Working	82.5%	21.3%	50.8%
Not working	17.5%	78.7%	49.2%

Rivas Municipality

Employed?	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	%
	%	%	
Working	74.8%	38.2%	53.4%
Not working	25.2%	61.8%	46.6%

La Conquista Municipality

Employed?	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	%
	%	%	
Working	52.6%	36.5%	43.3%
Not working	47.4%	63.5%	56.7%

San Marcos Municipality

Employed?	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	%
	%	%	
Working	63.4%	25.4%	40.4%
Not working	36.6%	74.6%	59.6%

In proportional terms, more men have salaried jobs and more women are self-employed:

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
What type of job do you have?	Self-employed	31.8%	44.2%	36.4%
	Family labor, non-remunerated	10.3%	12.4%	11.1%
	Salaried position (employee/worker)	57.8%	43.4%	52.6%

The following table indicates the main activities carried out by members of the surveyed families, by sex. The size of the "economically dependent" population--those younger than 15 and older than 64 years of age, representing some 60.5%--is

noteworthy. The dependent population is mostly students. If we also add those working at home and the unemployed who are seeking work to the dependent population, we find that 85.5% of the members of these households live off of the income generated by 14.5% of family members.

Main Activity		
	Male	Female
	Col %	Col %
Studies	50%	43%
Farming	9%	0.7%
Housework	1%	31%
Services	8%	3 %
Do not work due to age	19%	11%
Domestic employees		5%

Both men and women work an average 8 hours per day, though there is greater variability in women's work schedules. More women have longer workdays, with 14.1% of women and 9.3% of men working 9 hours or more.

On average, the workweek consists of 6 days, but more women (21.7%) than men (13.5%) work seven days per week.

Neither women nor men have benefited from training for their specific jobs.

The jobs of two-thirds of those working are located relatively close to home; women's jobs are slightly closer to home than those of men.

3.9 Employment Income and Revenue from Other Sources

The most frequent individual monthly incomes range between C\$400 and C\$1,200, although the average monthly income is C\$1,402. Women's incomes are lower than men's; 59% of women have salaries below C\$801, while only 42% of men earn salaries in this range.

Córdobas		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
Monthly income from work	0 income	6.6%	7.3%	6.9%
	1 to 400	11.2%	30.1%	18.5%
	401 to 800	30.6%	28.5%	29.8%
	801 to 1200	30.1%	17.9%	25.4%
	1201 to 1600	13.3%	12.2%	12.9%
	1601 to 2000	4.1%	2.4%	3.4%
	More than 2001	4.1%	1.6%	3.1%

The majority of households surveyed (193) receive income from sources other than current employment. On average, each family receives 936 Córdobas per month (US\$72) from different sources, mainly from remittances sent by family members working abroad. These remittances average C\$897 (\$69) per month per family.

The combined average family income and average income from other sources (to the family group) provides approximately \$180 per month, which is the cost of the "basic basket" of 54 consumer items for a family of six.

Around 72% of working women and men help cover the household expenses and consumption, with slightly higher amounts provided by women.

Almost one fifth of the people in the studied households personally receive family remittances from abroad. Most recipients of such assistance are women.

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
Other sources of income or revenue	Family remittances from abroad	3.6%	30.4%	18.1%
	Help from family members within Nicaragua	0.9%	1.6%	1.3%
	Pension		0.3%	0.2%
	Retirement	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%
	Revenue from renting home or room	0.2%		0.1%
	Other activities that generate income	0.2%		0.1%
	Do not receive other income	94.8%	67.6%	80.0%

Studies conducted by FIDEG in the cities of Managua, León and Granada show that a large number of families develop survival strategies when they feel their economic situation is inadequate. The main strategy, in such a case, is receiving some form of support. In 1992, 25.6% of families received some form of financial help. By 2000, this percentage had risen to 37.6%. Men and women alike receive support, however women have consistently received a greater percentage of such assistance (40.1% to 47.6% between 1992 and 2000). The same strategy is also employed in male-headed households, but it is not as significant (18.6% to 28.1%, between 1992 and 2000) as in the case of female-headed households.

The origins of such support have changed radically between 1992 and 1999. While most financial help came from family members living inside Nicaragua in 1992 (55.8%), this type of support dropped to 42.1% in 1998 and had virtually disappeared by 1999. Simultaneously, financial help from family members living abroad began to increase significantly.

It is important to remember that in late 1998, Nicaragua was brutally ravaged by Hurricane Mitch. Thus, the amount of assistance coming from family members within Nicaragua was reduced while financial support coming from abroad--from those already living abroad as well as those leaving Nicaragua in search of new alternatives--increased. We could say, therefore, that when internal assistance networks are used up, people are forced to seek out other options for resolving their family's needs. One such option is migrating.

Nonetheless, support from family members living in Nicaragua reappeared in 2000. There was, it would seem, a certain family "re-accommodation" and support networks have resumed their previous form.

CHAPTER 4. Current Male and Female Migrants

4.1 General Characteristics of Current Emigrants

Out of the 202 family groups studied, some 301 family members are currently residing outside of Nicaragua. Of these, 16.9% are men and 83.1% are women. The predominance of females among the emigrant population is explained by the bias of the sample, which was selected from among homes with female migrants. Nevertheless, an important percentage of men from these families have emigrated as well.

Most of the emigrant population falls within the age range of 26-40 years. Among men, migration begins to intensify between the ages of 19-25 years.

		Sex of Emigrant				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Age Group	13-18	2	3.9%	9	3.6%	11	3.7%
	19-25	19	37.3%	52	20.8%	71	23.6%
	26-40	22	43.1%	147	58.8%	169	56.1%
	41-60	8	15.7%	39	15.6%	47	15.6%
	61 or more			3	1.2%	3	1.0%
Total		51	100.0%	250	100.0%	301	100.0%

Most emigrants are the daughters (or sons to a lesser extent) of the head of household, of his or her partner, or of both, followed by sisters (or brothers) and sisters-in-law (brothers-in-law), and finally the grandchildren of the head of household.

Relationship of the person who emigrated with the head of household	Col %
Partner	2.0%
Daughter/Son of head and partner	37.5%
Daughter/Son of head of household alone	24.6%
Daughter/Son of partner alone	5.3%
Father/Mother	6.3%
Father-in-law/Mother-in-law	0.7%
Brother/Sister or Brother-in-law/Sister-in-law	12.0%
Son-in-law/Daughter-in-law	2.0%
Grandchild	7.3%
Nephew/Niece	1.3%
Other relative	0.7%
Other (not related)	0.3%
Total	100.0%

The great majority (94%) of emigrants who are family members of surveyed households are in Costa Rica. Very few have migrated to the United States. Most of those who are currently outside of the Nicaragua have gone during the past decade, and more specifically during the second half of the 1990s. The greatest emigration waves have taken place during the first part of the 1990s, and later in similar proportions from 1995 onward. The high point was in 1997, and has been gradually

lowering since then. During the present decade, a relatively high flow of emigrants from these zones has been maintained. In April 2001 (the date of the survey), some 6% of the total family members reported outside of the country had already emigrated.

		Sex of Emigrant		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
Year of migration	1979-1989	3.9%	5.6%	5.3%
	1990-1995	29.4%	31.6%	31.2%
	1996-2001	66.7%	60.8%	61.8%
	No response		2.0%	1.7%

4.2 Some data about the husbands/partners of women who have emigrated

Among women currently living outside of Nicaragua, 6 out of every 10 have a partner or husband. Of those who have a partner, only 8% of these are living in the surveyed household. Nonetheless, slightly more than half of the husbands or partners (56%) provide economic support to the surveyed family, most likely in the form of child support for their sons and daughters who are part of the household. It is reported that the husbands of emigrant women earn an average of C\$1,812 (US\$139) per month.

It is interesting that while approximately half of the children of migrants are living in the visited households, only 8% of their husbands reside there. Although the husband's current residence was not investigated as part of this survey, we assume that very few husbands are able to live with their partners on a daily basis. This would also be true in cases where the husband has also emigrated, since the majority of female emigrants obtain work as domestic employees, meaning that they live in the houses of their employers. Moreover, such an arrangement is considered to be more economically advantageous, since it helps these women save more of their earnings.

During feedback workshops with the relatives of emigrants, we asked where these husbands are living. The responses were not clear, although frequently they indicated that they are "living in other homes" and "with other women." It is also understandable that husbands opt to live in other homes rather than stay with their mothers-in-law or both parents-in-law. This situation also reflects the fact that women prefer to leave their children under the grandmother's care rather than the father's, and the generally accepted idea that men are incapable of raising their children.

4.3 Aspects related to the working conditions of emigrants

A significant percentage of those currently outside of the country (45% of the 301) were students, unemployed or housewives, who therefore earn no income. Some 54% of the 250 women who emigrated worked in Nicaragua prior to their departure. Of these women, 67% were domestic employees. The men had had more varied occupations, but the majority had worked in agriculture. One fifth of the men and women were studying prior to migrating.

		Sex of Emigrant		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
What type of work prior to emigrating?	Housewife		8.8%	7.3%
	Waitress/Waiter	2.0%	0.4%	0.7%
	Domestic employee	2.0%	36.0%	32.2%
	Student	19.6%	20.0%	19.0%
	Hair Stylist		0.8%	0.7%
	Food Processing		1.2%	1.0%
	Agriculture	29.4%	0.8%	5.6%
	Did not work /Unemployed	19.6%	17.2%	17.6%
	Commerce	2.0%	4.8%	4.3%
	Construction	11.8%		2.0%
	Teacher		1.6%	1.3%
	Agricultural laborer	5.9%		1.0%
	Seamstress		0.8%	0.7%
	Secretary		3.2%	2.7%
	Non-Agricultural Worker	3.9%	2.4%	2.7%
	Nurse		0.4%	0.3%
	Accountant		1.6%	1.3%
	Mechanic	2.0%		0.3%
	Jeweler	2.0%		0.3%

The following table details the current labor situation of emigrants. It is noteworthy that most women (80%) work as domestic employees, while men have more varied types of jobs: construction, agriculture, and security guards or caretakers.¹² Approximately 5% of emigrants do not have regular employment.

		Sex of Emigrant		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
Type of work in country where residing	Domestic employees	3.9%	79.9%	67.0%
	Guard/Caretaker	11.8%		2.0%
	Waiter/Waitress	3.9%	2.0%	2.3%
	Nun		0.4%	0.3%
	Hotel Inspector		0.4%	0.3%
	Construction	39.2%		6.7%
	Dependent		1.6%	1.3%
	Agriculture	17.6%	2.0%	4.7%
	Secretary	5.9%	2.0%	2.7%
	Not working/Unemployed	2.0%	5.2%	4.7%
	Merchant	2.0%	0.8%	1.0%
	Food Processing	2.0%	1.2%	1.3%
	Welder/Electrician	3.9%	0.4%	1.0%
	Nurse		0.8%	0.7%
	Seamstress		0.4%	0.3%
	Mechanic	2.0%		0.3%
	Driver	2.0%		0.3%
	Jeweler	2.0%		0.3%
	Cashier		0.4%	0.3%
	Concierge		0.4%	0.3%
	Food Packing	2.0%	0.8%	1.0%
	Teacher		0.4%	0.3%

¹² Other studies indicate the same tendency. Morales and Cranshaw, FLACSO, and Pritchard, UNDP.

	No response		0.8%	0.7%
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Aware of the difficulties related to obtaining precise and accurate information about the income of direct informants, information about the income of those currently working outside of Nicaragua was not requested. However, in focal groups with men and women recently returning from abroad, we obtained information about incomes. Women reported incomes between 40,000-80,000 Colones (US\$124 to \$248), while men reported incomes between 50,000-120,000 Colones (\$155 to \$372). Our subjective perception was that higher salaries than those actually obtained were reported, particularly among women who appear to idealize the working conditions and their general situations in Costa Rica. Nonetheless, despite exaggerated claims, the average of these salary ranges is equal to two times the average salaries earned in Nicaragua for similar work.

The minimum legally stipulated salary for a domestic employee in Costa Rica is currently 44,000 Colones (approximately US\$135), although inexperienced recently arrived immigrants frequently do not obtain the minimum wage.

4.4 Family remittances, survival strategies of family groups

As mentioned above, almost all studied households receive family remittances from abroad. Most of the emigrants--4 out of every 5--send remittances to their relatives. However, this is much more common among women than men. Some 87 women out of every 100 send remittances to their relatives, while only 55 out of every 100 men do so.

In focal group discussions, women explained these differences in the regularity of remittances as due to the fact that men feel less obligated to send such support, and that men have more difficulty finding work. One former migrant explained that she never failed to send money home when she was working in Costa Rica, and that she even paid her husband's fare abroad when she decided to return home. In her case, she had to wait up to three months for her husband to send money home. He always told her that "the situation here is difficult," and "since I knew it was true, I stopped complaining and decided to work things out myself." This situation can also be partly explained by the fact that men from these family groups emigrate at younger ages. They are children looking for a way to become independent of the family group, and haven't left children in Nicaragua (43% have no children). It would appear that their support is in the form of reduced family expenditures (the family no longer has to support them) and covering extraordinary expenses when these arise.

Remittances are mainly sent through friends and relatives who are traveling. It is the least expensive way to send money, and perhaps the safest. One third of remittances are sent through companies that specialize in this service. The disadvantage of using banks and other similar services is that they charge approximately 10% of the amount being wired, so they are less interested in wiring small amounts.

		Total
		Col %
Means used for sending money to relatives	Bank or Postal Service	4.5%
	Directly when returning home	0.8%
	With friends or relatives	62.2%
	Employment agents	1.6%
	Companies that wire remittances	30.1%
	Meeting at the border	0.8%

Those who send remittances generally do so on a monthly or almost monthly basis. Few do so sporadically or irregularly. In a focal group with men, those working as migrant farm laborers (sugar or banana harvests) explained that they bring the money personally when they return, or they meet their partners at the border.

		Sex of the Emigrant		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
How often do they receive remittances	Monthly	60.7%	62.8%	62.6%
	Almost every month	14.3%	22.9%	22.0%
	One time per year	3.6%	5.0%	4.9%
	Irregularly, sometimes	21.4%	9.2%	10.6%

On average, each family receives the equivalent of 897 Córdobas per month (US\$69 at the time of the survey). The following table indicates the distribution of approximate monthly incomes from remittances. A total of 210 remittances were reported, since some households receive more than one per month.

Córdobas		Count	Col %
Monthly income from family remittances	1 to 400	60	28.6%
	401 to 800	95	45.2%
	801 to 1200	19	9.0%
	1201 to 1600	19	9.0%
	1601 to 2000	10	4.8%
	More than 2001	7	3.3%

The main reasons why remittances are sent are, first and foremost, to cover food expenses, followed by medical expenses and children's education.

These stated purposes coincide with the actual way that families use such financial support (the table indicates the frequency of responses to each alternative; each respondent was given the option of responding to as many as three times). Only 3.3% of respondents use the money for savings, to help with future investments or expenses.

		Col % response %
Ways remittances are used	Food	31.7%
	Housing	2.6%
	Clothing	3.4%
	Children's education	13.0%
	Medical costs	9.3%
	Savings	0.4%
	Payment of debts	1.8%
	Other	1.2%
	No response	36.6%

When respondents were asked what they would do if they had more choice about how to use the money from remittances, they reiterated their preference for covering food expenses, but also indicated two other areas where they would want to invest: in their homes, and for savings.

The frequency and regularity of remittances received by these households does not seem to be generally common, and in the case of this study appears to be associated with female migration. Information about migration and remittances obtained by a recent IEN survey¹³ indicates that among families with a relative abroad (34% of the 1,600 households visited nationwide, with the exception of the Atlantic Coast), only 37% receive remittances and 63% do not. With respect to the use of these remittances, data is similar to that found in our survey: 88% use such funds to cover basic consumption, mainly food, 2.9% for housing, 3.8% for business, and 1.4% for savings.

According to a FLACSO study¹⁴ about the remittances sent by immigrants from five Latin American countries (including Nicaragua) residing in the United States, these have tended to consistently increase since the 1980s. The quantity or amounts of the remittances tend to vary greatly, and the variation is not so much due to family income but rather to other factors such as the commitments made between family members, the economic conditions in the country of origin, or the emigrants' perception of the needs of relatives back home. The same study found that the value of remittances corresponds to 6-16% of the income obtained by immigrants working in the United States.

If we estimate that emigrants from the households studied in Rivas and Carazo—who are mostly women working as domestic employees in Costa Rica—earn an average monthly salary of US\$150.00 (50,000 Colones), then the average remittance sent home corresponds to 46% of their earnings.

The contribution from emigrant women does not only take the form of cash or remittances. They also provide other goods, clothing, and appliances. In interviews, they refer to "coming home with lots of gifts for the family" at Christmas and Easter vacations.

We conclude, therefore, that emigrant women have a very strong commitment to their families, sustained by the strong sense of responsibility by the mothers of emigrants,

¹³ Module on: Migración, Uso de Remesas Familiares y Ahorro, Encuesta Nacional Sobre Gobernabilidad Y Elecciones, conducted from 28/05 to 12/06, 2001. Instituto de Estudios Nicaragüenses.

¹⁴ Inmigración y Remesas Familiares, Orozco, de la Garza y Baraona. Cuadernos de CCSS, FLACSO, Costa Rica, 1997

and the frequent and up to date information they receive about their family group's needs (those still in Nicaragua). This information is facilitated by the geographical proximity of the destination country.

Many analyses and proposals have been made in an attempt to direct some of the money from remittances to savings and investments. To date, no institution has been interested in promoting such a program. On a recent edition of the Nicaraguan television program *'Esta Semana,'* Roberto Zamora, a Nicaraguan banker from the BANCENTRO group, referred to negotiations underway with the National Bank of Costa Rica to stimulate the use of these banks for sending remittances, and the use of at least 1% of funds generated from these for a social development fund. Since it is estimated that US\$250-300 million enter Nicaragua annually from Costa Rica in the form of remittances, 1% could signify at least US\$25 million. This initiative would imply reducing the commissions charged for the corresponding bank services, to encourage the use of banks for sending remittances. As we saw in this study, banks are not frequently used for this purpose.

In group discussions with the relatives of migrants, we discussed the fact that a very small proportion of families uses part of the remittances for savings. These relatives indicated that it seems impossible to save, since they still have many basic needs that are not met, and very low incomes in general. However, we also found that some families spend these funds on "non-essential" expenditures, such as clothing and parties for special events like baptisms, graduations, etc.

4.5 Women who have worked abroad and have returned

The reason why women most frequently return to Nicaragua is to be with their children again. In group discussions with returned emigrants, women expressed that *"we all want to go back (to Costa Rica), because there's nothing to do here. You can't do anything without money. But the pain we feel about leaving our children is what keeps us here."* Older women also returned due to exhaustion. The work is hard and after a number of years, "one really feels worn out."

Female emigration to Costa Rica also seems to be perceived as something temporary, and cyclical in nature. Those who have returned believe that they will go back again, and those who are in Costa Rica say they are there only temporarily.

We found 64 families (32.2%) who report 66 female family members with experience as working emigrants and who have returned to Nicaragua. Almost all of these worked in Costa Rica. They spent an average of three years abroad. Some of them are part of the 50 former emigrants who expressed a desire to return to Costa Rica to work.

Their reasons for having emigrated are similar to those of current emigrants, and above all to those mentioned by women who want to leave the country. The most common is the search for a better wage, and in second place the desire to provide economic support to their families.

Almost 6 out of every 10 who returned to Nicaragua did so to care for their children, and in general to care for their families. Dissatisfaction with the working conditions abroad was not a reason frequently mentioned. Those who took part in the Rivas and Belén focal group made reference to abuses on the part of their bosses (not being paid, or being paid less than had been agreed), but the La Conquista group (8 out of 10 had worked in San Jose) indicated that their bosses "had been fair" and they had no complaints.

		Count	Col %
Why emigrants returned?	Dissatisfied with the work conditions abroad	9	14.1%
	To care for children/family	38	59.4%
	Too old/ No longer wanted to work	3	4.7%
	Obtained work in Nicaragua	2	3.1%
	Is home temporarily, and will return to work	11	17.2%
	Became pregnant	1	1.6%

A considerable percentage of women who have returned--6 out of every 10--would recommend that other women seek work abroad. Nonetheless, the far majority also feels that being far from home is not positive for their children's development. Despite the material benefits and educational opportunities generated from working abroad, they believe the lack of direct contact with children is detrimental.

		Count	Col %
How does your absence affect children remaining in Nicaragua?	They have better educational opportunities	5	7.6%
	It guarantees that they won't have to work during childhood	3	4.5%
	It is not good, I am too far away to provide needed stimulation	57	86.4%
	No response	1	1.5%

We should point out that some of the women who indicated that they have returned to Nicaragua are actually here temporarily, since they will travel again to Costa Rica or the United States. During group discussions with women from the Rivas, Belén and La Conquista municipalities, we found that young women from these families are constantly torn between staying in Nicaragua and leaving as economic emigrants. Some who were home on vacation have decided not to return for the moment because they feel their children want them to stay, or because their mothers are ill. Others who indicated in the survey that they would emigrate again told us in focal groups that few had actually decided to go on a particular date. This was the case of the "La Conquista" focal group, where in theory nine women wanted to go. We found that only one had an approximate date for her departure. She was a 65-year-old grandmother who had lived many years in Costa Rica, and her reason for traveling was a doctor's appointment. Currently, she cares for an adolescent granddaughter, who she has persuaded to stay here. She doesn't want her to go live with her mother "because she's living with another man who is not the girl's father, and many types of things happen these days."

How, then, do these families reconcile their positive appraisals of women's economic emigration with the predominating conception that men are heads of households and the ones who should be in charge of maintaining families, while women should

dedicate their time to raising children and caring for their relatives? It would appear that these contradictions have not, in fact, been reconciled.

It was the unanimous opinion of a focal group comprised of male emigrants that women have greater advantages as emigrants in Costa Rica than men. However, when they were asked why they--and not their respective wives or sisters--were the ones crossing the border to seek work, it was clear that this was not an option for the married members of the group (there was only one single member of this group, who was 20 years old). Their responses included: *"because I am responsible for taking care of my family," "because I'm the one who should face any difficulties,"* or *"who is going to take care of the children, we certainly can't."* Moreover, one of them assured us that most women who emigrate do not have husbands.

4.6 Women who intend to emigrate

There were a total of 50 women from 25% of the surveyed households who reported "considering the possibility of emigrating," 44 of whom responded directly to the survey.

If we examine their distribution among the studied municipalities, we find that the highest percentage of women per family with the intention of emigrating in La Conquista (approximately 4 out of every 10 women), while approximately 22-23% in the remaining municipalities plan to emigrate.

		Women considering the possibility of emigrating			
		Yes		No	
		Count	Row%	Count	Row%
Municipality	Belén	10	22.7%	34	77.3%
	Rivas	24	23.5%	78	76.5%
	La Conquista	9	37.5%	15	62.5%
	San Marcos	7	21.9%	25	78.1%

The schooling levels of possible emigrants breaks down as follows: 24 out of 50 have a primary school education, 22 a secondary education, 3 are university students and 1 has no schooling.

When we explored their reasons for emigrating, the most common reason (half of the women) was seeking a better salary, followed by helping to support the family. Surprisingly, unemployment was the third most common reason, mentioned by only 18% of those intending to emigrate.

		Col %
Most important reasons for deciding to emigrate	Better salary	50.0%
	Cannot find work here	18.0%
	Want to work in other countries	8.0%
	Help support the family	20.0%
	To pay for children's education	2.0%
	To work and study	2.0

The majority of emigrants go to Costa Rica (84%), and a much smaller percentage to the United States. Almost all indicate that they have made the decision to emigrate, while only 8% mentioned having been persuaded by another family member.

The majority (8 out of every 10) indicate that they will make their own travel arrangements, while only a small portion will entrust such arrangements to a friend or relative. Discussions in focal groups gave us the impression that the issue of "legality" is not of great concern, and that the emigration process is generally "irregular".

We encountered great disparities in estimates about the amount of money required for exit visas and other travel procedures. Some 40% of respondents indicated amounts lower than 1,000 Córdobas (US\$77) while another 40% believed that 1,200 to 2,000 Córdobas would be needed. The latter may be a more accurate figure for traveling to Costa Rica, since some 9 women believed that more than C\$2,600 would be needed. Among those indicating much higher amounts were 7 women who hoped to travel to the United States. We understand that the variation in these estimates is due in large part to the degree to which travel is either legal or "irregular," whether or not those traveling have valid passports and whether or not they will need to pay someone to "get them across the border." A passport costs US\$27 in Nicaragua, and the entry visa into Costa Rica costs US\$20. One woman interviewed in Belén recounted that the last time she entered Costa Rica (she has lived there for 10 years with her husband and children), she had to pay the bus driver 10,000 Colones (US\$31) so that immigration officials ("La Migra") boarding the buses would not request her documents. After that experience, she decided it would be easier to get a new passport, travel with a tourist visa and then apply for her residency in Costa Rica, since she is entitled to resident status because her daughter lives there legally.

Most (64%) believe that they can obtain this money as a bank loan, which is in reality fairly unlikely.

When we asked them what "type of work do they think they will find," and "what type of work they would like to do," the majority (78%) responded in essentially the same manner to both questions, and stated "as a domestic employee." Is it possible that they did not understand the subtle difference between "think they will find" and "would like to find"? Or is it more of a defense mechanism, accepting what they will find so they do not feel frustrated?

Thus, most believe they are well prepared for domestic employment, and feel that their desire to work is their second strongest attribute for future employment.

		Col %
What work skills do they possess?	Experienced in domestic work	60.0%
	Like to work/desire work	26.0%
	Basic knowledge/experience	10.0%
	Have sold clothing on their own	2.0%
	Know how to sew	2.0%

In discussions with focal groups and during presentations of study results, many opinions were expressed that explained this coincidence between what women say they can do and what they would like to do. It appears that they only aspire to work as domestic employees because "*most other jobs require Costa Rican citizenship.*" "*They*

don't give work to Nicaraguan professionals because they are not legal residents, and because they undervalue Nicaraguan training." Moreover, *"domestic work lets us save more money since it includes lodging and food."* Some studies are revealing that domestic employment can serve as a "trampoline" to obtaining other jobs in the service and *maquila* (textile) industries, which have a higher status and provide job training.

We should also remember that the women from these families are not well integrated into Nicaragua's labor market, and almost half of those currently working as domestic employees in Costa Rica were students, unemployed or housewives.

The likely immediate scenario for the children of these potential emigrants will be staying with a relative. Very few plan to bring their children with them. A good portion of the women taking part in focal group discussions believe the cost of living in Costa Rica is higher than in Nicaragua, and that incomes are good but not sufficient for supporting a household with children. Moreover, grandmothers have traditionally provided "back-up" by caring for grandchildren, above all if they feel too tired for the demands of domestic work in Costa Rica.

The family members with whom potential emigrants would leave their children are listed in the following table. The order of preference is interesting, with grandmothers in first place, followed by "other people" in second place, their husbands in third place, and in fourth place taking them along. Very few would consider leaving them with older children, who they likely don't have.

		%
What will you do with your children?	Bring them with you	12.0%
	Leave them with your husband	18.0%
	Leave them with older daughter	4.0%
	Leave them with older son	6.0%
	Leave them with maternal grandmother	32.0%
	Leave them with maternal aunt	4.0%
	Leave them with other people	24.0%

Some two thirds of potential female emigrants from these family groups would stay in Nicaragua if there were possibilities for working, with acceptable salaries. The percentage of those who would not be persuaded to stay if higher incomes were available in Nicaragua (1/3) seems very high. It is possible that these individuals already have numerous family members on the other side of the border, and wish to reunite with them.

When asked, "what would you need to work here?" slightly more than half of the women wishing to emigrate responded that they would need financial and logistical support. Some 65% of those requiring financial support believe that 2,000-5,000 Córdobas (\$154-\$385) would be sufficient. Very few referred to raw materials (7) or training (9). Many did not respond to this question at all, perhaps because the limited opportunities available in their communities make the question seem unrealistic.

During discussions with focal groups, women were asked about the nature of such financial or logistical support. In Rivas, some women (relatives of migrants and former migrants) expressed interest in credit for commercial activities, such as buying and selling different products, but under more favorable terms than those currently available. In Carazo, the women with whom we discussed the survey results clearly

indicated that they need jobs, and some expressed skepticism about the viability of credit as a solution to their economic problems.¹⁵

What would you need to work here?		Count	Col %
Financial support	Yes	20	62.5%
	No	12	37.5%
Logistical support	Yes	16	51.6%
	No	15	48.4%
Raw materials	Yes	7	22.6%
	No	24	77.4%
Training/Education	Yes	9	29.0%
	No	22	71.0%
Legal/Financial counseling	Yes	8	25.8%
	No	23	74.2%
Other	Yes		
	No		

Out of all the surveyed families, only 20 have male members who wish to emigrate. The number of men is much lower than the number of women. Fifty-three of the families (26% of the total number surveyed) have potential emigrants, either male or female.

4.7 Motivation

Members of the 202 households were asked about the reasons motivating their migration. The most frequent explanations for male emigration were unemployment and the desire to help support the family. The third most common response was seeking a better salary. Among women, the search for a better salary was the most frequent response, while helping support the family and unemployment were the second and third most frequent explanations for female migration.

		Sex of the Emigrant				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Reasons for migrating	Better salary	11	21.6%	118	47.2%	129	42.9%
	Can't find work	18	35.3%	33	13.2%	51	16.9%
	To experience life in another country	1	2.0%	14	5.6%	15	5.0%
	Family pressure	3	5.9%	4	1.6%	7	2.3%
	To help support the family	18	35.3%	80	32.0%	98	32.6%
	Other			1	0.4%	1	0.3%

¹⁵ In the framework of this project, consultant Olimpia Torres conducted an exercise to identify women's economic opportunities, providing more in-depth information about this aspect.

Group and individual interviews conducted in Rivas, Carazo, and San Jose revealed that children are the main motives, both for leaving one's community and for returning. Emigrants are seeking incomes that allow them to provide their children with better living conditions, yet they return when they feel their children's well-being requires them at home, because other adults have not been adequate substitutes and because their children are not being adequately cared for.

Despite the objective reasons that motivate these families to consider migration--which can be summarized as essentially their critical economic situation--there are also subjective reasons that, in the case of women, appear to be associated with gender conditioning. Women and men are socialized to internalize their love and sense of responsibility for their children in different manners; therefore, there are differences in the extent to which they are prepared to make sacrifices and "be flexible" in their search for a means of survival.

Studies about the different forms in which men and women enter these highly informal labor markets emphasize women's greater "versatility" and "flexibility," and their ability to perform jobs that they have never engaged in previously. They also stress women's ability to respond to even the most limited types of opportunities that present themselves. Women are less selective and less discriminating when they are seeking employment or a way of generating income to satisfy their family's most basic needs. One example of such "versatility" and the capacity to find survival strategies is employment-seeking emigration. We can assume, therefore, that female emigration will continue to increase as long as economic stagnation continues, or as long as the Nicaraguan economy fails to offer employment or only discriminatory employment opportunities to women.

In San Jose, Costa Rica, we found a woman from northern Nicaragua (Matagalpa) who was living in one of the ASTRADOMES's temporary refuges because she had not found either work or a place to sleep. Her main concern was obtaining income to cover the graduation expenses for two of her children, who would be concluding primary and secondary school in December. She estimated that she would need approximately US\$50 for these costs, but neither she nor her husband could generate this amount from activities in their community (food preparation and tailoring). She thought she could work until the end of the year in Costa Rica to earn this amount. Eight or nine years before, she had found work for a few months in San Jose without any problem. She had left her town with a friend, who had told her a relative could find them work in San Jose. After one week, neither she nor her friend had found anything. Here, we see how objective elements such as the acute economic crisis facing Nicaragua's northern coffee zone has combined with subjective elements (social expectations) to push women to seek out alternatives in Costa Rica.

We might speculate about the social value that women from these communities assign to labor emigration, and find that it is, in fact, seen as something positive. In focal group discussions with women from La Conquista, we asked, "Are women who go to Costa Rica in search of work viewed in a positive or negative manner?" The first response was that emigration is something "natural," but not necessarily positive or negative. Later, one of the former emigrants who has decided not to return to Costa Rica because her four year experience in San Jose was negative explained that when she tries to advise someone not to go, they don't believe her. *"It's as if they think I don't want them to do well, and exaggerate the difficulties."* It seems that they think, *"if she could do it, why can't I?"* In other words, she believes that there is a certain mythology operating where people believe that emigrating always guarantees a better future.

On the other hand, our interviews with some local officials indicated that in the municipalities with a history of migration, such as different border towns, "giving it a go in Costa Rica" is seen as something positive. In fact, in the case of women who have gone to work in the United States, relatives feel proud and even brag about the fact that they receive remittances in US dollars.

In focal group discussions, the men indicated that it is easier for women to find work, "because there is work available as domestic employees. While Nicaraguan women are highly valued as employees, Nicaraguan men have the reputation of being drunks and getting into fights." "Although we're not all like that, this negative image affects us all." Thus, the main recommendation given to fellow migrants is "behave yourself." Women also tend to think that it's easier for them to find work than for men. It was the general opinion among returned female emigrants that they will have no problem finding work as domestic employees in San Jose whenever they decide to go back.

4.8 The Migration Network

The main social support network for migrants consists of relatives and friends already living in Costa Rica, and others living in Nicaragua. One third of emigrants have risked finding employment on their own. In interviews with focal groups, we found both men and women had the support of a close relative on their first trip to Costa Rica. These relatives helped them enter via the least risky routes, and helped them find work with "recommendations" for employers who were looking for Nicaraguans to hire.

According to survey respondents, most men and women (94%) have arranged work abroad on their own.

Those who make their living from the "services" provided to a large number of people who risk entering Costa Rica without the required legal documents also form part of this "migratory network." The "coyotes" or those specializing in crossing people at "blind" (unsupervised) border points make a permanent living from this network. They consist of transport workers, migration authorities ("La Migra"), and the Costa Rican Police who offer services to guarantee that emigrants reach their desired destination. Of course, women are at a greater disadvantage in the purchase of such services, since it is commonly believed that they can and should pay in both cash and "in kind," in other words through providing sexual favors.

		Sex of the Emigrant		Total
		Male	Female	
		Col %	Col %	Col %
How did you get the opportunity to work abroad? Through....	The media	3.9%		0.7%
	Family members	11.8%	16.8%	15.9%
	Other relatives or friends in the community	9.8%	16.8%	15.6%
	Relatives or friends who migrated	37.3%	36.4%	36.5%
	Someone who came to the community looking for people to hire	2.0%		0.3%
	Private employment agency		1.2%	1.0%
	Own arrangements	35.3%	28.4%	29.6%
	Unemployed		0.4	0.3%

In general, women who emigrate and their relatives do not think it is necessary to have clear and precise information about the travel route, the means of transportation or the source of employment. Since they are viewed as people willing to struggle and take risks, going without information or legal documents is merely seen as part of the risk.

4.9 The legal status of female labor emigrants

There has been a great deal of speculation about women's relative advantages with respect to crossing the border and seeking employment in Costa Rica. One key aspect of this advantage is the fact that domestic work--the main occupation of Nicaraguan women in Costa Rica--is relatively stable employment. This relative stability is also related to the supposed legality of women working in that country. However, the great variation in the amounts that women estimate having paid to cross the border--in both the survey and in focal groups--and the specific stories of women who have returned about their weekend activities lead us to believe that female emigration is as "irregular" as male emigration. It could be that they begin their journeys with legal documentation since they do obtain passports and enter with tourist visas, but they are soon unable to afford renewal of their visas.

Focal group discussions lead us to believe that both women and men consider their legal status as a secondary issue, and corresponding legal documents as something desirable but not indispensable. The most important criteria is having sufficient contacts with migratory networks, and "trusting in God."

It could also be that the number of family groups from Rivas in this survey has biased the information in this aspect, since the border towns from this Department have their own migratory dynamic. We even heard jokes that people from Rivas need a passport to go to Managua (the capital of Nicaragua), but not to go to Costa Rica.

Moreover, testimony from both former and current emigrants indicate that employers have little interest in helping Nicaraguan employees normalize their legal situation, since they feel it offers neither them nor their country any advantages. To the contrary, the irregular situation of immigrants is actually more convenient in terms of keeping salary expectations in check, and reducing the possibility for complaints. One returning emigrant who was trying to explain why domestic work is so exhausting recounted that sometimes employers would state, "if you don't have papers, it's better if you don't go out on Sunday, you just stay with us and we'll pay you the extra day," and one just accepts this. Others explained that the young and single women are the ones who get into trouble, because they go out to the discotheques at night and get mixed up with the "*Migra*".

The 1999-2000 Costa Rican Ombudsman Report indicates that although some restrictions to immigrant workers have been eliminated, work permits from the Department of Immigration still need to be obtained for domestic employment and refugees.¹⁶

Information obtained from leaders of the Association of Costa Rican Domestic Workers and some immigrants working as "domestics" who take part in the Association's activities indicate that migrant women are increasingly living in Costa Rica with an

¹⁶ Page 160 of the report. Maintaining a limited number of foreign employees in the work place, and work permits issued by the corresponding ministries are the eliminated restrictions mentioned in this report.

"irregular" legal status. This is because of the generalized perception that migrant laborers have no rights because they are poor and foreigners, combined with women's tendency to interiorize their conditioning to be socially subordinate. What is, in fact, women taking advantage of available jobs in an occupation that has been traditionally ignored by legislation and left unprotected on a number of levels, is made to appear (and in women's perceptions as well) as an advantage and a justification for accepting any sacrifice required by the job. The supposed protection offered to domestic employees who live in their "workplace" becomes an instrument for greater subordination. For the women, unfortunately, this also frequently becomes a justification for underestimating the importance of seeking duly regulated work conditions and a legal migrant status in this country.

4.10 The Association of Domestic Workers

The Association of Domestic Workers, ASTRADOMES (*Asociación de Trabajadoras Domésticas*) was founded in San Jose, Costa Rica ten years ago. Its president or Coordinator is a Nicaraguan, and it has had 450 members during that period, but they come and go. At present they have 50 dues-paying members who actively participate in their activities. There are approximately 80,000 domestic workers in Costa Rica and this is the only organization that is addressing their needs and rights. They are affiliated with the Latin American Confederation of Domestic Workers that has its headquarters in Santiago, Chile. They also have observer status as an NGO in the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) through their participation in the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

During sessions held to discuss the survey results in Belén, Rivas, we asked former emigrants if they knew of this Association. A discussion ensued when one of the former female emigrants spoke with disdain about the Association, because it required monthly dues of \$C6 (US\$0.45). She explained that she went once to the ASTRADOMES office but never returned for this reason. Others in the group (non-migrants) argued that this was a very low and reasonable amount, if in exchange the Association could provide information and help defend women's rights.

ASTRADOMES's main concerns include discriminatory legislation, the lack of knowledge and interest among migrant domestic workers about their own rights, and the difficulties in organizing domestic workers.

Costa Rican Legislation:

- Domestic workers are excluded from many of the labor rights that most workers have in this country. This includes work hours, payment for overtime, vacation time, etc.
- There is a draft law on migration that intends to penalize employers who hire people without corresponding legal documents, as well as "marriages of convenience."
- ASTRADOMES has been lobbying a draft law (Reform of Article 104 of the Labor Code) that proposes improving the rights of domestic employees through recognizing the following work conditions: a 9-hour workday, one day off per week, and obligatory payment in money and not in-kind. The law was discussed in several legislative commissions in 2000, but it has never been a priority on the Parliamentary agenda. This project was introduced for the first time almost 10 years ago.
- One of the minority progressive parties (*Fuerza Democrática*) introduced another proposed legislative reform that would pay overtime for any work

beyond the 12 hours per day established in the present labor code for domestic workers. No progress has been made on this matter either.

Women who migrate and look for jobs as domestic workers lack information about their rights:

Most women who end up as domestic workers in Costa Rica lack previous work experience, and often know nothing or very little about their opportunities and legal rights.

This sector is difficult to organize:

Most of the women have no previous organizing experience. They believe that since they are residing in Costa Rica for a short period of time, it is not worth investing time and effort in seeking out information or organizing. Moreover, present law only guarantees 1/2 day off per week for domestic employees, so they have very little free time to meet. Some door-to-door visits are conducted by the Association, but they require more effort and are fairly risky. Finally, traditional trade unions have historically shown little interest in this sector.

ASTRADOMES's actions have included:

- Lobbying to improve legislation.
- Organizing efforts resulting in linkages with international domestic workers' networks, as well as recognition in Costa Rican society.
- Communication and training about:
 - The duties and rights of domestic workers.
 - Skills in areas such as baking, cooking, food hygiene, etc.
 - Self-esteem and leadership.
 - Sexual and reproductive health.
 - Conflict resolution.
- Information about training and other available resources.
- Facilitating and stimulating research and concrete social interventions.

The ILO-ASTRADOMES Project

The ILO Office in San Jose is currently supporting a small project being implemented by ASTRADOMES, called the "Pilot Information Campaign for Employers and Domestic Workers from the Montes de Oca District".

The purpose of this project is to publicize labor rights among domestic workers and their employers in a residential neighborhood of San Jose. The target groups are 15,000 domestic workers and 10,000 employers. The main activities include: a) a rapid assessment of the information, perceptions, prejudices and fears found among employers and domestic workers themselves, related to the duties and rights of domestic workers; and, b) an information campaign about the duties and rights of domestic workers.

In an interview with a journalist hired by ASTRADOMES to advise and support these two activities, she remarked that there appears to be a general lack of information among both the employers and the domestic workers. Moreover, any information campaign should consider the fact that providing information about labor duties and rights and the legal consequences of not abiding by the law could have negative effects on the present supply of domestic employment.

In a meeting held with 23 domestic workers, all Nicaraguans, a discussion about critical and controversial issues took place. Some of the questions raised were:

- *Do employers really ignore the rights of domestic employees, or do they pretend to ignore them?* A common perception among domestic workers was that employers are interested in not knowing. They “play the fool,” the women said.
- *Is it true that most of the domestic workers do not receive social security because they deliberately refuse to be covered?* Many of those present found this to be true. They believe that social security benefits require contributing 9% of their salaries and that is too much for them. In addition, sometimes they pay their contribution and the employer never pays his part, which doesn’t allow effective coverage. Finally, paying social security (this includes health care and pension in the case of retirement or the inability to work) is not worthwhile if they do not intend to live in Costa Rica all their lives. “We are not here to stay, we come only for a few years,” some said.
- *Are you willing to go ahead with an information campaign even if it might have negative consequences?* Possible negative effects might be less willingness to hire domestic workers because it is more expensive to do so when following all legal regulations, or stricter requirements from employers who do continue hiring domestic servants.
- Some of the women participating in the discussion expressed an interest in supporting the campaign, while others seemed wary.

CHAPTER 5. Children of Emigrant Families

As indicated in the table on the age structure of family members (p. 21), these households include 147 children between 0-5 years of age, 243 children between 6-12 years of age, and 194 children between 13-18 years of age, for a grand total of 584 children between the ages of 0-18 years.

5.1 Children 3-5 years of age: education and health care

There are a total of 76 children between the ages of 3-5 years, with the following gender and age distribution:

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Age	3	15	34.9%	8	24.2%	23	30.3%
	4	15	34.9%	10	30.3%	25	32.9%
	5	13	30.2%	15	45.5%	28	36.8%
Total		43	100.0%	33	100.0%	76	100.0%

Almost 7 out of every 10 of these children attend preschool, which is a relatively high rate, particularly in comparison to preschool coverage among Nicaragua's poor sectors. Seventy three percent of the girls and 65% of the boys of this age range attend preschool.

Similarly, families report that almost all of these children receive regular medical care, which contrasts greatly with Nicaragua's nationwide health coverage for this age group.

Almost 4 out of every 10 children in this age group have been under the care of relatives who are not the child's mother or father. These relatives include grandmothers, sisters and aunts. The substitute figure caring for children is always a female relative.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Who was or is responsible for taking care of children?	Mother	23	53.5%	22	66.7%	45	59.2%
	Grandmother	15	34.9%	8	24.2%	23	30.3%
	Sister	3	7.0%	1	3.0%	4	5.3%
	Father	1	2.3%	1	3.0%	2	2.6%
	Aunt			1	3.0%	1	1.3%
	Great-grandmother	1	2.3%			1	1.3%
Total		43	100.0%	33	100.0%	76	100.0%

5.2 Children between 6-18 years of age: education and domestic labor

Nine out of every ten children between 6-18 years of age (a total of 437 boys and girls) regularly attend school. This is a very favorable educational situation for these

children, most of whom attend public schools. There is a minimal difference between male and female attendance, slightly favoring girls.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Regularly attend school	Yes	186	87.7%	205	91.1%	391	89.5%
	No	26	12.3%	20	8.9%	46	10.5%
Total		212	100.0%	225	100.0%	437	100.0%

Moreover, almost all of the children attending school do so for the full five hours daily, five days per week. This implies that they receive education on a regular basis, according to the standard requirements of the country's public school system.

Almost half of the families report that it costs them less than C\$500 annually to keep their children studying in public schools, while 43% report that it costs between C\$501-1,000 per year (US\$39-77). The remainder reported higher amounts, which correspond mostly to children attending private schools.

		Count	Col %
Annual cost of educating children	Less than C\$ 500	193	49.5%
	C\$501 to 1,000	167	42.8%
	C\$1,001 to 1,500	12	3.1%
	C\$1,501 to 2,000	5	1.3%
	More than C\$ 2,001	1	0.3%
	Did not respond	12	3.1%

Few children of this age group were not studying. The reasons for not studying were varied, most frequently economic (one-fifth of those not studying), followed by children not taking advantage of educational opportunities, and followed by illnesses that limited their ability to attend school. In only 6 households were reasons given that openly minimized the importance of school, such as *"it's better to learn a trade through working,"* or *"school won't help children get a job."*

Among these 6-18 year olds, some 88% help with household chores. Boys spend an average of two hours daily on domestic chores, while girls spend an average of three hours daily on such work.

Almost half of the children help out 1-3 hours per day in the home, and almost one-quarter work 4-8 hours daily on household chores. Girls spend a larger number of hours on daily household work. Some 36% of the girls work 4-8 hours daily, whereas only 12% of the boys make such contributions. Here, we clearly see how traditional gender roles are reproduced in the socialization of sons and daughters.

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
Hours that children spend on domestic chores per day	.00	17.0%	7.1%	11.9%
	1.00	30.6%	18.3%	24.2%
	2.00	18.9%	21.0%	20.0%
	3.00	20.9%	17.0%	18.8%
	4.00	3.9%	5.8%	4.9%
	5.00	7.3%	25.4%	16.7%
	6.00	0.5%	1.8%	1.2%
	8.00	1.0%	3.6%	2.3%

5.3 Children aged 6-18 years: income-generating work

The survey has differentiated the work that children perform at home from labor that generates income, even if that income is not received directly by the child. Approximately 11% of children perform income-generating work, which is a relatively low percentage among low-income sectors. If we analyze this in terms of families, we find that only 31 out of the 202 families studied report that children have regular employment. The numbers are higher for boys than for girls.

If we want to separate the children working for income who are sons and daughters of emigrants from the other children who live in the same studied household, then we find that there is a slight difference favoring the children of emigrants. Probably all of the children in these families benefit from the income supplied by the remittances from abroad. In our conversations with focal groups, we learned that for the older daughters and sisters who have their own children, taking charge of the other children (those of the mother or sister working in Costa Rica, for instance) can mean having sufficient income for maintaining their own children as well, above all in the case of single women.

Insertion in the labor market: boys and girls who are not children of current emigrants

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Children 6-18 years of age who work and earn income	Does work	21	15.7%	10	7.6%	31	11.7%
	Does not work	113	84.3%	121	92.4%	234	88.3%
Total		134	100.0%	131	100.0%	265	100.0%

Insertion in the labor market: the sons and daughters of current emigrants

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Children 6-18 years of age who work and earn income	Does work	14	17.3%	2	2.4%	16	9.7%
	Does not work	67	82.7%	82	97.6%	149	90.3%
Total		81	100.0%	84	100.0%	165	100.0%

The number of children working outside of the home increases as children's ages increase. Some 5% of children 6-12 years are working, while this percentage rises to 18% among adolescents. Adolescent boys work outside the home more frequently than girls do.

6-12 year age group

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Children 6-12 years of age who work	Does work	6	4.8%	7	6.1%	13	5.4%
	Does not work	120	95.2%	107	93.9%	227	94.6%
Total		126	100.0%	114	100.0%	240	100.0%

13-18 year age group

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
13-18 year olds who work	Does work	29	34.5%	5	4.8%	34	18.0%
	Does not work	55	65.5%	100	95.2%	155	82.0%
Total		84	100.0%	105	100.0%	189	100.0%

More than half of these young people began working after 13 years of age, but one third of the children earning income began working between 6-8 years of age. The average age for beginning to work outside of the home is lower for girls (10.3 years) than for boys (12.6 years). This coincides with the situation nationwide. National statistics on the economically active population include people between the ages of 10-64 years because of the high prevalence of young people working, particularly in the countryside.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Age children began working	6-8 years	7	20.0%	7	58.3%	14	29.8%
	10-12 years	3	8.6%			3	6.4%
	13-15 years	20	57.1%	3	25.0%	23	48.9%
	16-18 years	5	14.3%	2	16.7%	7	14.9%

Boys mainly work in agricultural production, followed by construction. The most frequent job among girls is selling food or other products.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Current work of children 6-18 years of age	Sell food	4	11.4%	5	41.7%	9	19.1%
	Sell different products	2	5.7%	5	41.7%	7	14.9%
	Help in mechanic shop	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	Assistant in construction	7	20.0%			7	14.9%
	Assistant cook			2	16.7%	2	4.3%
	Transportation assistant	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	Agriculture/ harvest	17	48.6%			17	36.2%
	Other	1	2.9%			1	2.1%

Some 60% of young people's employers are relatives, followed by private individual employers (28%) and businesses (11%).

Most work at home or in their employer's home, and almost 20% work in the street or moving from place to place. They generally work in their own town or district, and travel to work on their own.

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
Where do you work?	Office building	2.9%		2.1%
	Construction site	2.9%		2.1%
	Farm	8.6%		6.4%
	Your house	31.4%	25.0%	29.8%
	Employer's house	37.1%	16.7%	31.9%
	Market	2.9%	16.7%	6.4%
	Streets	5.7%	25.0%	10.6%
	Moving/different places	5.7%	16.7%	8.5%
	Other	2.9%		2.1%

Half of the working children work for four hours or less per day, while the remainder work for more than four hours. One group of boys and girls (37%) work full time.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Hours worked per day	1			2	16.7%	2	4.3%
	2	5	14.3%	4	33.3%	9	19.1%
	3	1	2.9%	1	8.3%	2	4.3%
	4	11	31.4%			11	23.4%
	5	2	5.7%	1	8.3%	3	6.4%
	6	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	7	1	2.9%			1	2.1%
	8	13	37.1%	4	33.3%	17	36.2%

Boys employed in daily income-generating activities generally work slightly more than girls do, approximately one hour more on average. Boys work almost five and one-half hours per day, while girls work an average of four and one quarter hours.

The following table details the amount of days per week that young people work. We see that a significant portion of children (almost 47%) work 6 or 7 days per week.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Days worked per week	1	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	2	1	2.9%			1	2.1%
	3	6	17.1%	1	8.3%	7	14.9%
	4	7	20.0%	3	25.0%	10	21.3%
	5	5	14.3%			5	10.6%
	6	13	37.1%	6	50.0%	19	40.4%
	7	1	2.9%	2	16.7%	3	6.4%

However, girls work more days per week on average than boys. The girls work six and one-half days, while the boys work an average four and one-half days per week.

The next table details the salaries earned by these boys and girls. The fact that slightly more than half of these children do not receive salaries is noteworthy. This means they work for relatives without receiving any remuneration. More girls than boys receive no salary for their work. On average, boys and girls who do receive salaries earn C\$477 per month (US\$36.70). The girls (there are only 4) earn an average of C\$600 per month, while boys earn an average C\$450 per month.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col%
		Count	Col%	Count	Col%		
Amount children earn per month	0	17	48.6%	8	66.7%	25	53.2%
	120	3	8.6%			3	6.4%
	150	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	240	2	5.7%			2	4.3%
	300	4	11.4%	1	8.3%	5	10.6%
	480	1	2.9%			1	2.1%
	600	2	5.7%	2	16.7%	4	8.5%
	800	1	2.9%			1	2.1%
	880	1	2.9%			1	2.1%
	900			1	8.3%	1	2.1%
	1200	2	5.7%			2	4.3%

The amount children earn per month

Sex	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	450.00	18	356.72
Female	600.00	4	244.95
Total	477.27	22	339.25

Most young people receive their salary on a weekly or monthly basis, and all receive their salary directly, without mediation by their parents or another adult.

Some 60% of women interviewed would prefer that these children finish their studies and then go to work, while another 15% wished that they would study full-time. This would appear to indicate that child labor in these families is due to economic pressures, rather than negligent attitudes on the part of parents.

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	Col %
		Col %	Col %	
What would you like your child to do?	Go to school full-time	17.6%	9.1%	15.6%
	Work full-time	5.9%		4.4%
	Go to school and work part-time	14.7%		11.1%
	Conclude studies and then go to work	52.9%	81.8%	60.0%
	Find a better job	2.9%		2.2%
	Learn a trade	5.9%	9.1%	6.7%

This would seem to be confirmed by the following table, where the reasons for allowing children to work are predominantly related to the family's economic situation (the first two combined equal 80.7%).

		Col %
Most important reason for letting children work	Support the household earnings	58.1%
	Helping a family business	22.6%
	The child is not interested in studying	3.2%
	Learning to work is more useful than going to school	6.5%
	School fees too high to pay	3.2%
	Marriage	3.2%
	Mother is single	3.2%
Total		100.0%

Consistent with the opinions expressed above, those surveyed believe that families would be adversely affected (economically) if children did not work.

There is a high degree of willingness, at least in theory, to allow working children to study, as long as their studies do not interfere with their work schedules. Almost 30% of working children also study. Only one-fifth of working children between 6-18 years of age encounter family resistance to studying (6 girls and boys).

		Col %
The child would go to school if an educational option that did not interfere with work were available	Yes	51.6%
	No	19.4%
	Study and work	29.0%

In general, the phenomenon of child labor in these households is less serious than nationwide. Although no reliable data about child labor in Nicaragua is available,¹⁷ the most recent estimates (1997) by organizations working with children indicated that 11% of the nation's population between 10-18 years of age was working. Studies of poor households with "children at risk" (school dropouts, victims of physical abuse, ambulatory work) revealed that even after taking part in child development programs for various years, half of the children from these households are working outside of the home, and almost all of them work within the home.¹⁸

If we add the number of children who work four hours or more in the home to the number of children working four hours or more in income-generating activities, we find a total of 142 children, or 32.5% of the total (between the ages 6-18 years) whose living conditions (working at least four hours per day) interfere with their adequate

¹⁷ The results of the household survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor to detect the prevalence of child labor nationwide are expected in August 2001.

¹⁸ School: Socialization of 7-11 year olds: the effects and gender equity, (*La Escuela, los afectos y la Equidad de Género en la Socialización de Niños y Niñas de 7 a 11 años*), 04/2000, study for Save the Children-Norway, by Barahona, Zuñiga, Pérez, and other previous studies.

development. In other words, although it is reported that most school-age children attend school, the information we obtained about these children's work commitments would indicate that at least one third of them are seriously affected by problems in school performance, dropouts and grade repetition.

5.4 The children of emigrants

Most of the emigrants have children. Some 431 children were reported, who form part of the families of 76% of the 301 people who have currently emigrated. Some 81% of the emigrant women have children, and 57% of the men.

The following table outlines the age and sex distribution of the children of emigrants. One third of them are 0-6 years of age, while the other two thirds are divided between 7-12 year olds and 13-18 year olds. Approximately half of the children are male and half are female, with slightly more males.

		Sex				Total	
		Male		Female		Count	Col %
		Count	Col %	Count	Col %		
Ages of emigrants' children	0 to 3 years	37	16.6%	27	13.0%	64	14.8%
	4 to 6 years	35	15.7%	33	15.9%	68	15.8%
	7 to 12 years	87	39.0%	80	38.5%	167	38.7%
	13 to 18 years	64	28.7%	68	32.7%	132	30.6%
Total		223	100.0%	208	100.0%	431	100.0%

Almost half of the children of emigrants live in the homes of surveyed families, and began living with these families in the 1980s. Some 61% of these began living in the households in the 1990s, which makes sense since almost 90% of current migration began in that decade.

A small percentage of these sons and daughters (17%) lived previously with another relative or person, and came to live with their present family group when the person who took care of them also migrated (54%), or because the cost of living in Costa Rica is high (17%). In a few cases, the previous caretaker no longer wanted to care for the child, or the child feels better in the present household, or the caretaker died.

In the case of the emigrant children who do not live with the surveyed family (the other 50%), the majority (some 88%) live with their parents abroad, or with someone else in the same place where their fathers and/or mothers reside.

Almost 4 out of every 10 of these children have lived previously with the surveyed family, which indicates that their mother, father or both have most likely emigrated in the past to set up the necessary conditions in the country of residence, and later emigrated again with their children.

This interpretation is backed by data from the following table, which indicates the reasons why these children no longer live with the surveyed family. Almost 8 out of 10 have gone to live with their mother or their family abroad.

		Count	Col %
Reasons why they left to live in another place	To meet mother abroad	68	77.3%
	The surveyed person could not cover the costs of maintaining the child	3	3.4%
	Relatives wanted child to join them	3	3.4%
	Child got married	1	1.1%
	To be closer to school	7	8.0%
	Parents divorced	2	2.3%
	Child was not happy	2	2.3%
	There was no one to care for child	2	2.3%

Sixteen of these children of emigrant mothers or fathers reported working for an income. They represent 3.7% of all children of current emigrants studied, and 9.7% of those whose children live in the surveyed households.

5.5 General opinions and attitudes toward children

Eighty percent of the women responding to the survey indicated that they would like to have a total of 2-4 children, without any preference expressed about the gender of children. From this, we can deduce a conception of family planning, which indicates two things. There is a certain expectation of the number of children they would like to have or already have, and this expectation is to have a smaller family than the traditional Nicaraguan family.

The ENDESA 98 registered an overall fertility rate of 3.9 children per woman, with 3.1 among urban women and 5.4 among rural women. The desire to have smaller families could be associated with being working emigrants, who are faced with more difficulties linked to childcare, and perhaps greater exposure to family planning information. Moreover, the eventual reduction of family size could be a factor that lowers the likelihood of emigrating, due to less economic pressure. In other countries, higher education levels and better living conditions linked to smaller family size have been associated with reduced levels of employment-seeking emigration.

Half of the women believe their mates or husbands are in agreement about the number of children they wish to have.

		Count	Col %
Does your husband or mate want the same number of children?	The same number	101	50.2%
	More children	10	5.0%
	Fewer children	4	2.0%
	Doesn't know	23	11.4%
	Not relevant (not married or in a couple)	62	30.8%
	Did not respond	1	0.5%

The reasons for having children were first and foremost associated with emotional-personal needs: realizing oneself as a woman, and being able to express one's affective/protective needs. The second most common reasons were more pragmatic in nature: having help in the home, and someone to care for them when older.

		Col %
To realize myself as a woman	Very important	89.1%
	Somewhat important	4.5%
	Not important	4.5%
	No response	2.0%
To have someone to love and care for	Very important	97.5%
	Somewhat important	2.5%
To be closer to husband/mate	Very important	42.3%
	Somewhat important	19.4%
	Not important	37.8%
	No response	0.5%
To continue the family name	Very important	47.3%
	Somewhat important	24.4%
	Not important	28.4%
To have more people to contribute to family income and support family businesses	Very important	61.7%
	Somewhat important	15.9%
	Not important	21.9%
	No response	0.5%
To have help caring for home	Very important	84.6%
	Somewhat important	5.5%
	Not important	10.0%
To have someone to care for me when old	Very important	91.0%
	Somewhat important	6.5%
	Not important	2.5%
Other reason		

The women consider realizing their needs with respect to affect and protection to be the most important, followed by realizing themselves as women.

		Col %
Most important reason for you	Realize oneself as a woman	20.4%
	Have someone to love and care for	55.7%
	Contribute to family income/business	0.5%
	Help in household	4.0%
	Care for me when old	19.4%

Nonetheless, an important percentage of the female respondents believe that their husbands or mates view children most importantly as recipients of love and protection, while 13.8% feel that continuing the "family legacy" is the most important reason for them.

		Col %
Most important reason for your husband	Realize self as a man	11.2%
	Have someone to love and care for	21.9%
	Continue the family name	13.8%
	Contribute to family income or business	0.5%
	Help in household tasks	3.1%
	Care for him when old	9.2%
	No response	1.0%
	Does not have spouse	39.3%

A large number felt that concerns about a child's future and economic difficulties were two powerful reasons for not having children.

When asked the most important reason for not wanting children, concerns about the child's future were again the most frequently cited, followed by already having children and then economic difficulties.

		Col %
The most important reason for not having children	Economic difficulties	24.9%
	Difficulties finding work	5.0%
	Difficulties finding someone to care for children	1.5%
	Concern about the child's future	33.8%
	Already have enough children	31.8%
	No response	3.0%

Once again, when we explored opinions about the demands that children place on families, women responding to the survey most frequently cited the economic demands.

		Col %
What are the greatest demands that children place on family?	Overall costs	62.7%
	Education/health costs	22.4%
	Conflict between childcare responsibilities and work	2.5%
	Concern about children's future	11.9%
	Other	0.5%

Although the far majority of those surveyed had no preference about the gender of their children, the second most common response was a preference for daughters.

		Col %
Prefer sons or daughters?	Sons	8.0%
	Daughters	18.9%
	No preference	73.1%

The reasons for preferring daughters, in order of frequency, were the submissiveness of daughters (38%), and a daughter's willingness to help in household work (23%). The reasons for preferring sons included their independence, and their greater safety.

There was general agreement that education is more important than employment for children between 5-14 years of age. However, although the majority felt that education is more important for children aged 15-18, a minority group felt that employment is more important for this age group. Almost one third of respondents indicated they would like their child (6-18 years of age) to work.

		Col %
What is most important for boys 5-10 years old?	Education	100.0%
What is most important for girls 5-10 years old?	Education	100.0%
What is most important for boys 11-14 years old?	Education	100.0%
What is most important for girls 11-14 years old?	Education	100.0%
What is most important for boys 15-18 years old?	Education	93.5%
	Work	6.5%
What is most important for girls 15-18 years old?	Education	92.0%
	Work	8.0%

		Count	Col %
Would you like your child aged 6-18 years to work?	Yes	65	32.3%
	No	136	67.7%

The professions preferred for boys are auto-mechanics, farmers and construction workers, while for girls the preferred professions are secretaries, beauticians, housewives and seamstresses. These opinions merit two comments. Firstly, the occupations preferred for both boys and girls imply little aspiration for social mobility, or jobs requiring better or more training. Secondly, they reflect traditional occupations for both genders.

The following table is related to the first observation. Parents most frequently hope that their children will obtain mid-level technical training, equally for boys and girls.

		Count	Col %
What does your boy need to be able to work?	Primary school	15	7.5%
	Basic high school cycle	21	10.4%
	High school diploma	34	16.9%
	Technical training	98	48.8%
	University	32	15.9%
	No response	1	0.5%
What does your girl need to be able to work?	Primary school	15	7.5%
	Basic high school cycle	21	10.4%
	High school diploma	34	16.9%
	Technical training	98	48.8%
	University	33	16.4%

Slightly more than one third believe they can afford the cost of this training for their child, while the remainder feel they cannot or are unsure if they can. The responses are essentially the same for daughters and sons.

		Count	Col %
Can you afford this education for your sons?	Yes	56	27.9%
	No	78	38.8%
	Not sure	66	32.8%
	No respon.	1	0.5%
Can you afford this education for your daughters?	Yes	57	28.4%
	No	77	38.3%
	Not sure	67	33.3%

The average age when children begin to work is 18 years, both for females and males. Interestingly, more than 40% responded that 19-25 is a good age to begin working for both sexes.

		Minimu	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Good age to begin working: boys	N 201	10	25	18,57	2,36
Good age to begin working: girls	201	10	25	18,90	2,36
Valid N (listwise)	201				

The far majority of respondents believe that a good age for their children to marry ranges between 18-30 years, for both sexes. The most frequently cited age was 22-24. The ages mentioned for daughters were slightly higher than those mentioned for sons.

CHAPTER 6. Lessons Learned

6.1. Main Variable Correlations

6.1.1 Poverty and female labor migration

This study's findings confirm the association that is generally made between poverty and irregular labor emigration. Most of the family groups in the studied households are trying to escape extreme poverty through a strategy that includes female labor emigration. If we correlate the "weight" of economically dependent family members with average direct incomes, we find that an average monthly income of US\$108 should be able to maintain approximately 6.5 people. This would provide each of these family members with an average consumption valued at US\$0.55 per day. With an additional average monthly income (from a range of sources) of US\$72, these families obtain an overall average family income that covers the "basic basket" of 54 consumer goods, valued at US\$180. The most important source of financial support entering these households is remittances from women who are currently working as domestic employees in Costa Rica.

Although one third of returned women would prefer to emigrate again, even if they had better incomes and living conditions in Nicaragua, the majority of emigrants feel obligated to leave in search of income that they are unable to obtain at home, or better income than they are able to earn in the Nicaraguan labor market. Poverty and the bleak prospects for improvement are the main "expulsion" factors for most of the young women, who are also mothers. In other words, this type of emigration is not in reality freely chosen, or carried out in a "voluntary" manner.

As part of their responsibility as mothers, these women perceive the economic or material needs of their children as their first priority. Thus, any disadvantage or negative impact caused by their condition as irregular emigrants is overridden by the income they are able to obtain in Costa Rica, which far surpasses the few opportunities for remunerated income in Nicaragua.

"The pain of leaving one's children" or "the pain of making one's children suffer in the same way that they suffered when their mothers also left" seems to momentarily curb the desire of some young women to emigrate, particularly those with very small children. The older former emigrants--some of whom are now grandmothers caring for the children of their emigrant daughters--allude to the harshness of work as domestic employees in Costa Rica.

Migrant women save a large portion of their incomes to send as remittances. These complement the incomes of their family groups in Nicaragua on a regular and substantial basis, although their incomes are considerably lower than those earned by male migrants working in Costa Rica. This study confirms the FLACSO study's hypothesis, that the amounts received by families do not depend on the level of earnings but rather the level of commitment and the perception of needs of those remaining in Nicaragua. Thus, we may conclude that due to a range of gender-related factors, female labor migration contributes more to alleviating the poverty and extreme poverty of family groups than male migration.

6.1.2 Migration, legal status and rights

We found no evidence that the legal status of migrants traveling between Nicaragua and Costa Rica was a factor of importance, either for male or female labor emigrants.

Failure to possess legal documents is not a major impediment to crossing the border, thanks to networks of contacts (both known and unknown) who facilitate the movement of migrants, either out of solidarity or as a form of livelihood. Sometimes legal immigrants in Costa Rica lose their legal status due to the failure to renew documents (because of cost) or as one emigrant taking part in a focal group explained, "if I have to tend to my family's pressing needs, searching for work and solving problems, I can't be worrying about my documents."

In general, we found a lack of awareness about an immigrant's rights in a foreign country among both former migrants and the families of migrants.

Out of 42 people who took part in focal groups in Rivas and Carazo, we did not find one person who knew either basic information about legislation protecting immigrants or institutions or programs from which assistance may be sought in the case of problems. Some women knew about the Association of Domestic Workers (ASTRADOMES) in Costa Rica, and in one case the Association had provided concrete support to defend a woman when her employer did not pay the agreed upon salary.

An "irregular" status is accepted as normal among most people and other agents involved either directly or indirectly with labor emigration, and is in large part a consequence of the emigrants' ignorance and lack of interest in knowing about his or her rights. Moreover, emigrants fail to view institutions on either side of the border as resources available to them.

Neither sexual abuse nor economic extortion was reported in this survey. During group interviews in Nicaragua, we sensed a tendency to idealize the working conditions and income earned, specifically in the case of domestic employees. Some references were made to abusive treatment, but only after insistent inquiries. The first reaction was always a positive one. Even when accepting that "occasionally one is not lucky," the women indicated that they were capable of stopping any abuse or mistreatment, either through verbal protests or resignation in extreme cases, without any serious consequences. We found significant differences among the former emigrants from San Marcos, who were very explicit about the abuse and discrimination they had encountered while working in Costa Rica.

None of the women taking part in group sessions had apparently experienced sexual abuse, but we will probably need to use other techniques to facilitate the revelation of this type of information.

There is awareness about the risks that women run, particularly when traveling from Nicaragua to Costa Rica. Former male emigrants (from Rivas) spoke more about their problems, and even reported a recent case of a Nicaraguan who was robbed and murdered while traveling back to Nicaragua.

In a meeting of Nicaraguans (immigrant females) at the ASTRADOMES headquarters in San Jose to discuss the scope and possible difficulties of a future information campaign about immigrant rights, a broad range of problems and negative aspects of working conditions were mentioned. During individual interviews, extensive reference was made to the discrimination these women face as domestic employees and violations of Costa Rican laws, particularly unjustified firings, overly long workdays and minimum wage issues. The different perceptions could be linked to the fact that the exchange in San Jose took place with immigrants who are organized and are, therefore, better informed. However, we also sensed a psychological mechanism

among returned migrants which leads them to unconsciously idealize their experiences in Costa Rica, helping them justify their strong desire to go back there again.

For those lacking proper documents, the risk of being deported is greatest for men and for young women. In both cases, this is because of greater exposure to "public life," making them more vulnerable. Domestic employees are "protected" to the extent that they do not leave the workplace.

On either a conscious or unconscious level, economic emigrants accept the fact that their "irregular" status means they cannot exercise certain basic rights, such as freely circulating on public transportation, or visiting places of entertainment.

The 1999-2000 Costa Rican Ombudsman Report indicates that the number of complaints is low, given the number of migrant workers in this country. Frequently, the complaints refer more to violations of labor rights than to any abuses of individual or civil rights.

6.1.3 Gender relations and female migration

If six out of every ten women who have emigrated from the studied family groups have husbands, then the pressures of poverty and economic need are changing traditional gender roles related to work and other family relations. Frequently, husbands cannot respond to the social expectation of being the only provider, or the main provider. These men openly expressed fear about the risk of being rejected and/or abandoned when their spouses became the main providers through the income earned via emigrant labor. Cohabitation--viewed as one of the obligatory canons of the patriarchal family--becomes a mere eventuality under these conditions. Fidelity is another norm that is thrown into continuous explicit or implicit question in these relationships, with more complaints on the part of men given that women are already more accustomed to male infidelity.

The family groups' cohesion develops around common survival interests, and a female head of household who is focused on improving her children's material well being. The main economic strategy is the young emigrant's salaried employment as a domestic employee, combined with the non-salaried domestic work of the female head of household and other women and girls who remain in the emigrant's community of origin.

With respect to "reproductive work"--particularly the roles of raising and socializing children--not only have gender roles remained unchanged but the responsibility of women within the family groups has actually increased. Fathers do not see themselves as resources for caring for their own children, and others rarely view them that way either. In these family groups, childcare by non-related females is considerably more common.

Most family groups include three generations, with a seemingly unstable composition since some members are continuously moving back and forth between the communities of origin and destination. This behavior appears essential not only to the family's material survival, but to its overall cohesion as well.

In an attempt to evade the significance that emigration can have on a women's autonomy or in relation to her personal and sexual life, migrant men prefer to believe that single women are the ones who tend to emigrate in search of jobs.

Women's emigration is socially accepted by both men and women in these communities, because they believe that women are in an advantageous position for obtaining domestic employment in San Jose, Costa Rica, because of women's versatility in performing the range of activities included in such employment, and because women feel a more "natural" obligation to take care of their children.

A significantly high proportion of households that have a female member who has emigrated to Costa Rica to work are headed by females. Different studies indicate that the number of Nicaraguan households headed by females has been increasing during the 1990s, and it is likely that the model of a female provider/head of household is coinciding with a number of objective and subjective factors that encourage their daughters--even when they have spouses--to become the family's key providers through emigration.

Predominantly female migration takes place in these households. Given the notable differences in marital status (according to the sex of household members) and the high proportion of female-headed households, we would tend to think that female emigration has a higher association with the disintegration of marriages than male emigration. The percentage of men in these households who are married or in couples is much higher, while the women are more likely to be separated or divorced. Given the predominant patriarchal norms and practices, it is much more likely that the wife of a male emigrant would maintain the marriage despite a geographical separation, than would the husband of a female emigrant under similar circumstances.

The main advantage this type of labor emigration offers has been the possibility for many young women without income--such as students and housewives--to enter the labor market.

6.1.4 Mother-Father-Child Relations

Female labor emigration is undoubtedly a family strategy that is employed to alleviate the poverty of family groups, and especially to provide the children of these families with better living conditions.

We find an association between families with female emigrants and relatively good school attendance and regular medical check-ups among children, in comparison to children from other families with similar income levels.

There does not appear to be a high incidence of child labor linked to income generation in these families, although a high proportion of girls work long hours on domestic tasks in the home. Nonetheless, the results of other studies on child labor in Nicaragua confirm our belief that the supplementary income provided by emigrants reduces the pressure that these families feel with respect to children working.

Although most of the mothers responding to this survey declared that school is the priority for their children, we also found many who believed it is desirable for children to work.

There is a strong direct correlation between female labor emigration and children being raised and socialized by father or mother substitutes. Almost half of the children of emigrants are not being raised by either of their parents. This is a much higher proportion in comparison to nationwide estimates (ENDESA 98), and in relation to general cultural practices. From this, we may conclude that it is likely that the children affected by female labor emigration will develop in a context of affective and emotional

vulnerability. How and to what extent the people who are left in charge of these children actually substitute for the parents--not only in terms of their physical care and well-being, but also in terms of the affective relations--will need to be further explored. The most frequent substitutes are grandmothers, who traditionally have played this role in Nicaraguan families, regardless of whether they are headed by females or whether a member of the family has emigrated. However, this role is strengthened under conditions of internal or external migration.

We found a high level of awareness among the women of these families about the risks associated with being separated from their children. This was expressed clearly as "the pain of leaving one's children," or "the pain of living far from one's children."

The father appears to be a secondary figure in child rearing. The men interviewed openly expressed their inability to take responsibility for their children, and their inability to substitute for the mother in the case of her absence. In this sense, there is no great difference with respect to traditional family gender roles, but this situation reinforces the distant affective role of men and the symbolic formal authority they hold in their family groups.

Women, fulfilling their role as mothers fully dedicated to their children, decide to migrate out of a commitment to their children's well-being and not due to a failure to care for them. Frequently, they are forced to return earlier than they would like, also to attend to children's needs. If they want to go back (to Costa Rica), it is generally because they have a good part of their children there.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Characteristics of the Family Groups of Female Migrants

1. The way the sample was selected insured that all of the 202 households studied have at least one member--mostly females--currently working abroad, generally in Costa Rica (a total of 301).
2. More than half of these households are female-headed, which is much higher than the percentage of female-headed households nationwide. They reside in dwellings made up of one household, with an average of 6.5 people per dwelling. The number of people found in each household varied a great deal, and a significant percentage had more than 7 members.
3. The population studied is mostly urban (78%), and has not engaged in internal migration. Some 83.4% report not having changed their domicile.
4. Family groups have an extended family structure, mostly with "vertical" links to migrant members and their children (mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and the emigrant's children).
5. One quarter of the families have other female members who also wish to emigrate to Costa Rica to seek better incomes as domestic employees. One third of these families have other female members who already were emigrants, and some of these wish to return to Costa Rica.

6.2.2 Schooling

6. The families studied have high rates of schooling in comparison to nationwide statistics. We can assume that female migration is associated with relatively high educational levels, with respect to national averages.
7. Women have slightly higher levels of schooling than men do. Almost one third have secondary education, coinciding with the national tendency for slightly higher educational levels among women.
8. The most frequent reasons for not continuing studies are economic, and have affected women more than men.
9. Neither women nor men have benefited from training for the specific jobs they perform.

6.2.3 Employment and Income

10. Half of the people between 15-64 years of age in these households are working, with considerable differences based on gender. Some 7 out of every 10 men work, while only 3 out of every 10 women have employment. Almost one third of women report that housework is their main activity.
11. Most members of these households are economically dependent, mainly because of the large numbers of children and adolescents.
12. More than half of the men obtain income from salaried work, but salaried work is less common among women. The number of women working for salaries is almost the same as the number who are self-employed.
13. Those who work generally contribute to family consumption, regardless of whether they are men or women. Approximately 72% of working men and women contribute to household expenses, with slightly higher contributions from women.
14. In a manner consistent with national and international tendencies, income inequities based on gender occur here as well, with males earning higher salaries than women do. While 60.7% of men earn C\$401-1,200 per month (US\$30-92), 59% of the women earn less than C\$801 per month (US\$62).
15. Most surveyed households receive income from sources other than current employment, the most common of which is remittances from female relatives working abroad. On average, each family receives US\$72 per month from various sources, \$69 of which come from remittances. This amount is comparatively lower than the average US\$100 per month estimated by other studies, but is a considerable addition to the family group's total income.
16. Emigration has signified additional income that had not existed for almost half of the family groups studied, since the family members who emigrated earned no income previously. Emigration is part of a survival strategy employed by poor households, but it is also a means for women to enter the labor market.

17. Remittances from abroad are an essential additional income keeping most of these families above the extreme poverty line. These funds are used to cover the food, educational and health needs of children. Only 3% of families mentioned either saving or investing this money as a possibility.
18. The female population from these communities is only minimally integrated into the labor market, and has few real opportunities for remunerated work. This would explain why women have limited future aspirations that do not go beyond domestic employment.

6.2.4 Current Emigrants

19. 250 out of the 301 persons who left the family groups to work abroad are women. Continuing with the tendency of recent migration to Costa Rica, the far majority of emigrants from these families are the young daughters of the head of household or his or her spouse, and they have left Nicaragua during the second half of the 1990s. Six out of every ten current female emigrants have a spouse, and 8 out of 10 have children.
20. Studies about Nicaraguan migration to Costa Rica indicate that the most common employment for women is domestic work, while for men it is agriculture, construction and jobs in the service industry.
21. Comparatively, remittances from women come on a regular basis and are relatively small amounts, although they signify 46% of incomes, on average. One thus observes lower incomes with greater responsibilities among migrant women. This situation can be explained, to a large extent, by the very unequal responsibilities taken on by men and women in relation to children, and the worsening of many of the already prevailing gender inequalities in the context of irregular labor emigration.
22. Men and women have similar reasons for emigrating, which are principally economic. Men are motivated by the lack of employment, while women mostly identify the need for greater income as their main motivation. The possibility of helping contribute to family income is equally important to men and women, although women do so more consistently.
23. Females from the family groups studied generally emigrate under "irregular" conditions, supported mainly by migratory networks. Migrating legally--both during travel and while working in the destination country--seems to be desirable but not indispensable.

6.2.5 The children from families with female emigrants

24. It appears that the children from these families have good access to school and health care. Nine out of every ten attend school and have regular medical check-ups.
25. There are no significant gender differences in terms of access to school and medical care. Girls have slightly higher levels of access than boys do.
26. A high proportion of boys and girls are being cared for by people other than their own parents (almost 4 out of every 10 children aged 3-5 years). The ENDESA 98

reported the same proportion (38.8%) of children not living with their parents, but this was among all children younger than 15 years of age.

27. The great majority of children from these families take part in household chores. Boys spend an average two hours daily and girls an average of three hours daily on such tasks.
28. The fact that girls spend more time on such tasks--many girls work more than 4 hours per day on domestic tasks--is a reflection of gender prejudices that influence the way children are socialized.
29. Child labor is not a generalized phenomenon in these households, despite high levels of poverty. Of all children living in these households, some 11% work for income. This is consistent with nationwide child labor estimates.
30. Some 142 children, who represent one third of the children in the studied households aged 6-18 years of age, work for more than four hours per day, either in the home or at jobs that generate income. Such work schedules impede their adequate development.
31. Long workdays mostly affect girls working at home and boys working at jobs that generate income. However, girls are generally more affected since domestic child labor is a much more common phenomenon in these households.
32. Female respondents from these households had ambivalent positions regarding child labor. On the one hand, they believe the priority for children aged 5-18 years of age should be education, and that young people should begin working at 18 years of age. On the other hand, one third of these women responded that they would like their children in this age range to work. In most households, child labor is justified on the basis of economic need.
33. Most emigrants from the studied families have children (8 out of 10 women, and just over half of the men). Almost half of these children live in the surveyed household, in Nicaragua, and the other half live in the country where their parents reside.
34. We found no significant differences in the educational, health or labor conditions between the children of female emigrants and the other children living in the same household.
35. Help from relatives remaining in Nicaragua in caring for the children of emigrants appears to be a key aspect of the strategies employed by these households.

6.3 Recommendations for concrete actions and policies

1. Utilize available channels such as the National Economic and Social Planning Council and the Nicaraguan Migration Forum to propose that the Poverty Reduction Strategy incorporate an analysis of this phenomenon. Also, propose that policies be designed and implemented in such a way that they consider the changes that female migration is having on local economies and family structures.
2. Lobby the National Assembly and the Executive Branch, so that they better understand the phenomenon of economic-motivated emigration (especially among women) and see it as an important issue to be addressed in legislation and public

policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty, particularly given its relationship to the loss of human capital and the deterioration of social capital.

3. Support the National Migration Forum that was recently created in Nicaragua, as an important arena for inter-institutional exchanges and coordination. In particular, support its lobbying, information and communications initiatives about migratory phenomena.
4. Support the Nicaraguan Ombudsman Office in its work promoting and defending the rights of Nicaraguan emigrants abroad.
5. Promote more studies and produce information about the situation of migrant groups, particularly the perpetuation of gender inequities and the risks that migration poses to the development of children and adolescents.
6. Develop alliances with civil society organizations, to create more awareness about this phenomenon in national and international public opinion.
7. Publicize studies and available information among civil society organizations, so that they include actions in their agendas and work plans that slow down and discourage economic migration under difficult conditions, and that defend the human rights of those who decide to emigrate.
8. Develop concrete initiatives that help Nicaragua's broader women's movement and Coordinator of NGOs Working with Children to better understand the repercussions that female economic emigration has on gender equality and children's development, so that they develop actions to address the most negative effects of migration.
9. Develop concrete actions to raise awareness among the Mayors of the municipalities most affected by economic emigration abroad, and encourage the development of dignified income generating options, particularly for women.
10. Seek technical and organizational support for local leaders and officials in municipalities with a greater awareness of the problems associated with irregular labor emigration, to help them include specific attention to the problems resulting from emigration originating in their respective communities in their local government plans.

6.4 Project Recommendations for Concrete Actions

1. Help strengthen the gender perspective of educational, productive and human rights projects and programs of Costa Rican and Nicaraguan organizations that are beginning to implement "bi-national" and inter-sector efforts for Nicaragua's labor emigrants.
2. In the communities where households were studied, conduct activities to increase awareness about migrant rights and the implications of irregular labor emigration.
3. Conduct activities with the adults responsible for the children of emigrants, to raise awareness about child rearing and socialization conceptions, values and practices. Stress the importance of school, affect and gender equity in children's overall development.

4. Conduct activities with the men and women of families affected by irregular labor emigration, to raise awareness about gender equality and female emigration.
5. Help organize a radio program to provide information and facilitate communication among the families involved with migration, and specifically direct it at migrant women and the institutions working with migrant populations.
6. Promote links between municipal authorities and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and already existing programs for children at risk, to help initiate and/or strengthen actions aimed at increasing regular school attendance and eradicating child labor in the communities in the four studied municipalities.
7. Promote links between municipal authorities and the CSOs and already existing programs for adolescents and young people, to help initiate and/or strengthen sex education and cultural/organizational development actions in the communities of the four municipalities of this study.
8. Conduct an exercise that helps identify economically viable income-generating activities that can be successfully promoted among women in the same four municipalities.
9. Deliver the results of the exercise (8) to Mayor's Offices and organizations (CSOs and GOs) working in the municipalities. Also, help them obtain information about the economic, material and human resources available for promoting some of the activities that have been identified as feasible and potentially profitable, which are geared toward increasing women's incomes and improving their employment options.
10. Help organizations that are interested in organizing domestic workers and promoting and protecting migrant rights.
11. Publicize and support the application of laws that regulate domestic employment in Costa Rica and Nicaragua.
12. Mobilize resources from the donor community for programs and projects that help develop income-generating activities for women in the communities included in this study.

APPENDIX 2

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED:

1. Felix Peña: Mayor, Belén Municipality, Department of Rivas, Nicaragua.
2. Juan de la Cruz Pérez Mora: Vice-Mayor, Belén, Nicaragua.
3. José Gabriel Morales: Secretary, City Council, Belén, Nicaragua.
4. Mauricio Urtecho: Mayor, Rivas Municipality, Department of Rivas, Nicaragua.
5. Cecilia Macis: Director of Social Issues, Mayor's Office, Rivas, Nicaragua.
6. Esperanza Nuñez: Coordinator of AMNLAE, Rivas, Nicaragua.
7. Martha Bonilla: Vice-Coordinator of AMNLAE, Rivas, Nicaragua.
8. Vivian Baltodano: Vice-Mayor, La Conquista Municipality, Department of Carazo, Nicaragua.
9. Yolanda Paladino: Coordinator of AMNLAE, Carazo, Nicaragua.
10. Rosa Argentina López: Minister, Ministry of the Family, Government of Nicaragua.
11. Gloria Díaz Cadena: President, Association of Domestic Workers of Costa Rica (ASTRADOMES), San Jose, Costa Rica.
12. Rosa Acosta: Vice-President, ASTRADOMES, San Jose, Costa Rica.
13. Isis Campos: Costa Rican journalist who conducted research with ASTRADOMES, San Jose, Costa Rica.
14. María de Jesús del Socorro Ruíz, Immigrant from San Isidro, Matagalpa, Nicaragua living temporarily in the ASTRADOMES refuge.
15. Delia Muñoz Jimenez: Immigrant from Managua, Nicaragua, working as a domestic employee in San Jose, Costa Rica.

FOCAL GROUPS:

Belén, Rivas (Returned Male Emigrants)

1. Juan Carlos Umaña Rivera
2. Arsenio Isabel Peña Duarte
3. Fausto Reyes Chávez
4. Pablo Emilio Méndez Pérez
5. William José Gutiérrez Espinoza
6. Denis Antonio Espinoza
7. Franklin Talavera Pérez

Belén, Rivas (Returned Female Emigrants)

1. Eugenia Aguilar
2. María José Espinoza
3. Rosario Méndez
4. Cándida Rosa Ortiz
5. Marquesa Salinas
6. Estela María Zeas
7. Esther Zúñiga
8. Lidia Delgado

Belén, Rivas (Women who wish to emigrate)

1. Ana Paula Collado

2. Belkin Chávez
3. Maribel Flores
4. Maritza Lira
5. Karina Pérez
6. Emigdia Rodríguez
7. Leonela Rojas
8. Leslie Romero
9. Mary Ugarte

Rivas (Returned female emigrants)

1. Berta Altamirano
2. Ana María Briones
3. Daysi Peña
4. María Teresa Ruiz
5. Ana Carolina Ruiz
6. Justa Lidia Solís
7. Lizette María
8. Teresa de Jesús

La Conquista, Carazo (Women who wish to emigrate)

1. Paola Díaz
2. Escarleth Vargas
3. Karla Acosta
4. Vivian Baltodano
5. Maura Cruz
6. Marisol Traña
7. Esperanza Lobo
8. Arelis Umaña
9. Ligia Deyanira Baltodano
10. Gisele Aburto

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