

Poverty among the Indigenous Peoples of Nicaragua

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ACRONYMS

ABC	Atlantic Biological Corridor
ACARIC	Asociación de Campesinos y Agricultores de Río Coco
ADEPHCA	Asociación de Desarrollo y Promoción Humanitaria de la Costa Atlántica
ADFOREST	Administración Forestal del Estado
ALPROMISU	Alianza para el Progreso de los Pueblos Miskito y Sumo
AMC	Acción Médica Cristiana
ASDI	Autoridad Sueca para el Desarrollo Internacional
BICU	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University
CEPAD	Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro Alianza Denominacional
CIDCA	Centro de Investigaciones y Documentación de la Costa Atlántica
CIEETS	Centro de Inter Eclesial para Estudios Teológicos y Sociales
CNDT	Comisión Nacional de Demarcación de Tierras de las Comunidades Indígenas
CONADES	Centro para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible
CRE	Consejo Regional Electoral
CUC	Comité de Unidad Costeña
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
ENAP	Empresa Nacional Portuaria
ENEL	Empresa Nicaraguense de Electricidad
FADCANIC	Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua
FGF	Family Group of Four
FONIF	Fondo Nicaraguense para la Infancia
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional
GEF	Global Environment Facility (World Bank)
IBIS	Danish non-governmental organization
ICF	Indigenous Credit Fund
IAN	Instituto Agrario Nacional
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDSIM	Instituto de Desarrollo Social de la Iglesia Morava
IMSCO	Instituto de Investigaciones sobre Movimientos Sociales y Comunicación
INAA	Instituto Nicaraguense de Acueductos y Alcantrillado
INDERA	Instituto Nicaraguense de Desarrollo de las Regiones Autónomas (1990-1995)
INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos
INJUDE	Instituto de Juventud y Deporte
INSSBI	Instituto Nicaraguense de Seguridad Social y Bienstar
INRA	Instituto Nicaraguense de Reforma Agraria
INTURISMO	Instituto Nicaraguense de Turismo
KISAN	Kus Indianka Asla Nicaragua Ra (Union of Coastal Indians of Nicaragua)
MAG	Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería
MARENA	Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales
MAS	Ministerio de Acción Social
MCT	Ministerio de Construcción y Transporte
MED	Ministerio de Educación

MEDE-PESCA	Ministerio de Desarrollo Económico y Pesca
MEDE-MINAS	Ministerio de Desarrollo Económico y Minas
MIFIN	Ministerio de Finanzas
MINGOB	Ministerio de Gobernación (responsable for the Policía Nacional, el Distrito Naval de la Marina de Guerra, la Dirección de Migración y Extranjería)
MINSA	Ministerio de Salud
MITRAB	Ministerio de Trabajo
MISURA	Miskitu Sumu Rama
MISURASATA	Miskitu Sumu Rama Sandinista Asla Takanka
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEA	Organización de Estados Americanos
OSICAN	Organización de Síndicos Indígenas del Caribe Nicaraguense
PROCDEFOR	Proyecto de Conservación de Recursos Naturales y el Desarrollo Forestal
PLC	Partido Liberal Constitucionalista
RoN	Republic of Nicaragua
RAAN	Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte
RAAS	Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur
SICC	Southern Indigenous and Creole Community
SOLCARSA	Sol del Caribe S.A.
SUKAWALA	Sumu Kalpapakna Wahaine Lami (Association of Sumu Communities)
SILAIS	Sistema Local de Atención Integral a la Salud
TELCOR	Instituto Nicaraguense de Telecomunicaciones y Correo
TRENAMAKS	Territorio de Reserva Natcional Mayangna
UCOOPESCLP	Unión de las Cooperativas Pesqueras de la Cuenca de la Laguna de Perlas
UNO	Unidad Nicaraguense de Oposición
URACCAN	Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YATAMA	Yapti Tasba Masrika (Children of Mother Earth)

I. INTRODUCTION

This report is part of a larger project undertaken by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) designed to obtain information which will assist the planning of poverty alleviation programs in a number of countries in Latin America.¹ The specific aim of this report is to identify the conditions of poverty experienced by indigenous peoples in Nicaragua, to outline as far as possible the structural causes of this poverty, and to recommend measures which might be taken to alleviate it.

Nicaragua is one of the most disadvantaged countries in Latin America. Half of the population are described as poor and three-quarters of the rural population as extremely poor (World Bank 1995, IDB 1998a: 2, IDB 1998b: 11).² Available statistics, however, do not tell us much about poverty specifically among the country's indigenous peoples.³ There are three main reasons for this:

- By far the majority of Nicaragua's indigenous peoples - Miskitu, Creole, Mayangna, Garífuna and Rama - live in the part of the country commonly referred to as the Atlantic Coast, an area considered here to be co-extensive with the RAAN and the RAAS.⁴ Demographic and infrastructural conditions in these areas make the collection of reliable census data of almost any kind remarkably difficult.⁵
- INEC, the Nicaraguan state body responsible for obtaining census and survey figures, have not historically collected data based on ethnic distinctions. Although the World Bank's *Republic of Nicaragua Poverty Assessment Report* (1995) estimates that 20% of the population of the Atlantic Coast are "poor" and 61% "extremely poor", this statistic is uninformative about poverty experienced specifically by indigenous people since in most estimates less than 50% of the Atlantic Coast's population are considered indigenous.⁶
- The very different live-ways and means of subsistence employed by indigenous peoples make poverty-focused statistical comparisons with non-indigenous Nicaraguans problematic.

Even without the benefit of reliable statistics, however, it is quite obvious to regional experts, NGOs and local administrators alike that indigenous people belong predominantly to the section of the region's population classified by the World Bank as "extremely poor".

¹ The outlines of this project were discussed at consultative group meetings during April 1 and 2, 1998 between the Republic of Nicaragua and the representatives of the international community (IDB 1998a, b, c; RoN 1998a, b). During these meetings, which were co-sponsored by the Government of Switzerland, international donors agreed to pledge US\$1.8 billion for the period 1998-2000 to accelerate growth and reduce poverty in Nicaragua.

² 19% of Nicaragua's population are classified as poor and 50% as extremely poor (World Bank 1995).

³ In this report Creoles and Garífuna are classified as indigenous.

⁴ There is also a few indigenous people in Managua and in a handful of villages in northeastern Jinotega and Río San Juan departments. The members of this latter group lie outside the scope of this study.

⁵ Even the most authoritative population estimates for the Atlantic Coast are wildly variable. For example, in 1980 INEC estimated the population of Zelaya (now divided up between the RAAN, the RAAS and part of the department of Río San Juan) at 139,929 inhabitants. A year later a CIDCA study estimated Zelaya's population at 282,081 (Vilas 1989: 2).

⁶ Gonzalez's figures for 1998 suggest 46% of the Atlantic Coast population are indigenous.

As a region the Atlantic Coast is exceptionally rich in terms of natural resources. The coasts are teeming with fish, shrimp and lobster; the forests in the RAAN have extensive stands of pine and, to a lesser extent, mahogany and other hardwoods; and there are extensive deposits of minerals (gold, silver, copper and lead), especially along the headwaters of the rivers in the RAAN (Radley, 1960). Historically, however, extraction of these resources have been capitalized and directed by interests based outside the region, most of whom have had little interest in the long-term development of the Atlantic Coast. The indigenous peoples of the region have consequently had little opportunity to share in the commercial exploitation of this wealth, and gained little in terms of the development of a rationally planned and maintained infrastructure (Vilas, 1989). Transport throughout much of Atlantic Coast region remains waterborne.⁷ There are no roads suitable for motorized traffic at all in the eastern RAAS to either the indigenous rural communities or, astonishingly, Bluefields, the capital of the RAAS.⁸ In the RAAN the untarmacked roads from Puerto Cabezas (the capital of the RAAN) to the important market town of Waspam and the mining communities of Bonanza, Rosita and Siuna, are seasonally threatened by heavy rains. The market town of Waspam still lacks a proper wharf, while the bridge at Sisin on the important Puerto Cabezas-Waspam road is in a very poor state of repair.

⁷ Many of the smaller villages are located on the shores of the sea, lagoons or rivers and the inhabitants consequently rely on either canoes (*dories* and *pitpans*). There are a few commercial *pangas* (skiffs with outboard motor) and freightboat services between the larger communities, for example Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields, but these are only affordable to most people on an occasional basis.

⁸ In recent years the Danish NGO Danida has taken steps to tackle the problem of the lack of a good regional transport network. Using local labor they have financed and effectively executed a number of roads and wharfs, and have also completed an inland canal at Layasiksa (see DANIDA/Ministerio del Exterior 1998).

II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Atlantic Coast's remoteness has historically ensured that the peoples of the region never underwent the intense hispanicization experienced in earlier centuries by indigenous communities in other parts of Nicaragua. Unused to the dense forests and humid climate, unattracted to the poor soils and lack of deepwater harbours, and fearful of the hostile inhabitants, the colonial Spanish disregarded the area, concentrating their efforts on the considerably more hospitable Pacific drainages. The Atlantic Coast was, therefore, more or less abandoned to the original inhabitants, as well as English speaking buccaneers, traders and eventually settlers who arrived in small but significant numbers from the mid-seventeenth century onwards (Naylor, 1989). These English-speakers cultivated trading relations with some of the coastal Indians who became known as Miskitu, and brought the region into the anglophone Caribbean economy. The region thus became a British economic hinterland, at times even assuming the guise of an informal protectorate, in spite of the fact that it was formally part of the Spanish empire, and later Nicaragua (Floyd, 1967; Dozier, 1985; Naylor, 1989).

Under the terms of the Treaty of Managua in 1860 Great Britain finally recognized Nicaragua's ownership of the Atlantic Coast, though even then the Nicaraguans were forced to concede that the greater part of the region remain an autonomous reserve. In 1894, however, this reserve, hitherto governed by the region's English-speaking Creole elite, was dissolved, occupied by troops sent by President Zelaya and officially fully reincorporated into the Nicaraguan state, an act eventually recognised by Great Britain in the 1905 Harrison-Altamirano Treaty and resented to this day by many indigenous people. One significant concession which the Nicaraguan signatories to the Treaty of Harrison-Altamirano Treaty made was provision for the granting of inalienable communal lands to the indigenous communities and indeed in the years between 1915 and 1925 a number of community land titles were issued in accordance with the treaty 1915-1925 (Dozier, 1985).

From the mid-nineteenth century until the Sandinista Revolution in 1979, the Atlantic Coast experienced a considerable amount of economic activity. Foreign, mainly North American, companies came to the region to set up businesses organized around the extraction of natural resources, principally rubber, mahogany, pine, minerals, bananas, fish and lobster, enterprises in which many indigeneous people were directly or indirectly employed. These companies were primarily interested in the transnational export of these goods and they shipped them out through Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas both of which became sizeable towns by the end of the nineteenth century (Vilas, 1989).⁹ Regional infrastructure, hitherto virtually absent, thus came to be organized around the export of resources to markets in North America. Little provision was made for the future needs of the local population and so once resources in particular districts were exploited to the point where they were no longer profitable, the company roads, railroad lines, wharves and company stores, were either dismantled or allowed to deteriorate. Roads and other forms of transport to the Pacific coast regions were never constructed in the first place, since most of the goods shipped out from the region left via the Caribbean sea, and until the 1950s, before the advent of air travel to the Atlantic Coast, it was easier to reach Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas from New Orleans and Kingston, Jamaica, than it was from Managua. Even today only one untarmacked road connects Puerto

⁹ The indigenous populations who up until the mid-nineteenth century had been direct or indirect suppliers of locally produced goods to British and Jamaican traders now became occasional contract laborers.

Cabezas with Siuna and the western departments beyond, while Bluefields remains outside the national network of roads.¹⁰

The foreign companies organized their labor forces according to the perceived competences of the various groups. The managers and administrators were mostly North Americans; low level administration, as well as supervision, skilled and semi-skilled work were delegated to the English-speaking Creoles; while unskilled labor was left to the Miskitus and Mayangnas. The Mayangnas, coming from remoter communities than the Miskitu and often less familiar with employment practices, were by and large the most marginalised members of the workforce. They often therefore performed the most onerous and dangerous tasks for the lowest wages, particularly in the mining areas where they were most numerous (Hale and Gordon, 1987; and Rivera and Vernooy, 1991).¹¹

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Moravian Church also came to the Atlantic Coast and, implementing a philosophy of working in Miskitu and English, converted many indigenous people to Protestantism.¹² The Moravian Church, which in the early decades of the present century became the single most important influence in the region, introduced schools and health programs, and further cultivated among the region's indigenous people both strong senses of indigenous identity and a deep distrust of the Mestizo Nicaraguan state which seemed to promote them (Helms, 1971).¹³ The Atlantic Coast thus remained almost completely geographically and culturally isolated from the rest of Nicaragua, though not from the English speaking world, until the 1940s (Helms, 1971; Vilas, 1989).

In the 1950s, however, the Somoza administration began a program of countrywide modernization which included the Atlantic Coast (Vilas, 1989). The most significant effect of this modernization, however, was actually an indirect consequence of the land reforms which were being implemented further west in the departments of Chontales, Boaco and Matagalpa. These reforms succeeded in turning thousands of small-holdings in these central highland areas into large privately-owned coffee farms and coffee ranches. Many of the original inhabitants, having lost their holdings, began to seek suitable land to make new farms and began to push eastwards into the sparsely populated forested headwater areas of the Atlantic Coast river basins where unoccupied lands were evidently plentiful. This movement eastwards continues to this day and its vanguard is known as *la frontera agrícola* (agricultural frontier). It currently constitutes the most serious long term threat to both the indigenous communities and the stability of the region (World Bank, 1997).

The soils of the Atlantic Coast drainages are considerably more fragile than those in other parts of the country. Although they are suitable for the forms of shifting horticulture practiced for centuries by the small numbers of indigenous peoples, they are quite unsuited to the more intensive forms of agriculture which are practiced by many of the migrant campesino farmers advancing the agricultural frontier eastwards, and after one or two years the exhausted lands, denuded of forest, over-farmed with unsuitable crops, and poisoned by herbicides, are fit only for cattle grazing (World Bank, 1997). They are then either abandoned or sold to cattlemen who buy the supplementary property titles issued to the farmers by INRA,

¹⁰ People and freight from the western departments come to Bluefields by boat via the upriver port of Rama.

¹¹ In recent years some Miskitus, by virtue of better opportunities to become educated, have come to occupy senior positions.

¹² The companies also encouraged the use of English as the regional language of trade and employment by importing English-speaking workers from Jamaica and the southern United States.

¹³ From the mid-nineteenth century until the 1940s therefore health services and infrastructure in the region were provided not by the state but by the churches and foreign companies.

while the farmers themselves move eastwards into the forest to begin the cycle anew. The extent of this process has been documented by the World Bank Global Environmental Facility (World Bank, 1997). The advance of the agricultural frontier into both the RAAN and the RAAS has meant that the Mestizo population, a fairly small minority in the 1940s, have now become the region's majority ethnic group though at present they still predominantly occupy areas in the hitherto sparsely populated western and southern areas of the region. The coastline, savannah and Río Coco areas remain predominantly indigenous in ethnic composition.¹⁴

In the 1950s and 1960s the companies who had extracted natural resources from the region began to leave as costs made the region increasingly economically unviable. The peoples of the region, at this time predominantly indigenous, having lived and worked within an enclave economy oriented towards overseas export, were now left very much on the periphery of a national economy which they had never properly engaged. As the companies withdrew, their former employees, by this time dependent on the manufactured goods found in the company stores, returned to subsistence-focused strategies of survival (Helms 1971).

The years of the FSLN government (1979-1990) brought about the nationalization of large scale private enterprises as free market economic policies were abandoned in favour of a centrally planned economy. This resulted in the flight of a great deal of private capital from the region as entrepreneurs, fearful of nationalization and the severe economic downturns which were to come, abandoned the Atlantic Coast to worsening unemployment. Indigenous peoples were very conscious that in previous decades they had relied on the presence of private enterprise for cash and inexpensive goods. Consequently government economic policies came to be deeply unpopular among them,¹⁵ and many came to perceive the FSLN government's attempts to involve them in their vision of a truly unified Nicaragua as the unwelcome interferences of a Mestizo state apparatus with little understanding of, or sympathy for, the Atlantic Coast's particular history and socio-economic circumstances.¹⁶

An ensuing indigenous insurgency led to a panic-stricken government initiative which forceably removed large numbers of Miskitus from the Río Coco on the Honduras border to model villages further south at Tasba Pri. Others fled to Honduras to become either exiles or swell the memberships of the indigenous insurgency organizations (MISURASATA, MISURA and later KISAN) (Ortiz 1988).¹⁷ Indigenous villages in rural areas were repeatedly occupied by both insurgents and army units, and many people, fearing either identification with one cause by the proponents of the other or conscription and kidnapping, abandoned their homes and fled, either to larger and better protected communities or abroad (Hale 1994). Tens of thousands of people consequently lost their houses, livestock, canoes, tools and other possessions.

¹⁴ Even in the larger urban centers of Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas, El Bluff, Rosita, Bonanza, Rosita and Kukra Hill, Mestizo families tend to live apart from the indigenous families. Similarly very few Mestizos settle in indigenous villages. Other than in the riverbanks areas discussed above the Mestizo "invasion" of the Atlantic Coast region has not led to a widespread assimilation of the indigenous peoples.

¹⁵ The inability of the country to produce goods cheap enough to export during the FSLN administration produced massive hyperinflation, and rendered many of the imported goods desired by indigenous people either unobtainable or prohibitively expensive.

¹⁶ Although previous governments had tended to neglect the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast, they had at least, according to indigenous leaders, left them alone.

¹⁷ Further south in the RAAS many indigenous people fled to Costa Rica.

As peace returned with the Yulu Accord and the Autonomy Statute of 1987, returning refugees found that they had to reconstruct the conditions for making a living more or less from scratch.¹⁸

The 1987 Autonomy Statute (Ley 28), a government initiative designed to return the region to peace, formally recognised the rights of the peoples of the Atlantic Coast to self-determination, control of access to natural resources, and education in indigenous languages. This was to be accomplished by a political restructuring of the two Special Zones of the former department of Zelaya into two autonomous regions, the RAAN and the RAAS, whose administrations were to oversee the Autonomy process. The late 1980s, were consequently characterised by optimism (at least by the region's intellectuals),¹⁹ though by the early 1990s this had given way to frustration as indigenous people began to realise that the Autonomy Law had come to be regarded as an expensive liability by many in central government, costing the state money in terms of administrative expenses and providing obstacles to both the sale of concessions to overseas logging companies and the general implementation of government policies.

In 1990 UNO, the choice of many indigenous people in the RAAS in particular, was elected to national government. The new administration brought hyperinflation under control, began the dismantling of the centrally-planned economy, and fairly successfully created the conditions for steady market-led growth. Meanwhile elections for the regional governments put YATAMA (the most important indigenous political organisation in the region) and UNO administrations into power in the RAAN and RAAS respectively. In the recent national and regional 1997 elections these administrations were replaced both at national and regional level by the PLC who have since adhered to the policies set out by UNO emphasizing the liberalization of the market and massive reductions in public spending.

¹⁸ For those indigenous people living in the south, the situation was compounded in October 1988 when Hurricane Joan hit Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, Monkey Point and Corn Island (Vernooy 1992).

¹⁹ This early optimism is captured in many of the CIDCA publications from the period.

III. NICARAGUA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua contains "the largest remaining area of relatively pristine forest in all of Central America" (World Bank, 1997: 1). In addition to humid broadleaf forests with many endangered species of animal, it also contains pine savannahs (mainly in the northeast, coastal wetlands, mangroves, bamboos forests, and an extensive marine platform offshore; all biotopes of "outstanding biological value" (World Bank, 1997: 1). As the World Bank Global Environment Facility (GEF) consultants state, "The natural resources of the Atlantic slope underpin the regional economy and it is widely recognized that using them sustainably, and not exploitatively, is the key to the future development of the region" (World Bank, 1997: 1). Owing to fragile soils the region has little long-term agricultural value and the economy has been, up to recently, organized around small-scale shifting cultivation and fishing, both of which are practiced sustainably by small groups of indigenous people, as well as forestry and mining.

The RAAN, the largest of the two Atlantic Coast autonomous regions, is situated in northeast Nicaragua. At 34,200 square kilometres it is the largest administrative region in the country making up 24.6% of Nicaraguan territory. It is bounded by the Republic of Honduras to the north, Jinotega to the west, the RAAS to the south and the Caribbean sea to the east. The RAAS is 27,507 square kilometres in size and is bounded by the departments of Río San Juan to the south and west, Chontales, Boaco and Matagalpa to the west, the RAAN to the north, and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Taken together the RAAN and the RAAS thus make up over a third of the land area of Nicaragua. In spite of its size, however only 10.7 % (INEC, 1997) of Nicaragua's population live in this part of the country. Most Nicaraguans, more or less uniformly Spanish-speaking Mestizos, live in the far more densely populated departments further west.

In Nicaragua the category "indigenous" usually embraces the Miskitu, Mayangna and Rama peoples. It generally excludes the Creole and Garífuna minorities on the basis that these peoples are of African descent and only appeared on the Atlantic Coast in historic times. However there are good reasons to argue that the Creole and Garífuna minorities should also be considered indigenous. Firstly, both the Creoles and Garífuna became established on the Atlantic Coast before the Nicaraguan state presence was felt in the region and they therefore consider themselves autochthons in relation to the region's Mestizo population. Secondly, the Creoles and Garífuna share a number of cultural traits with the Miskitu, Mayangna and Rama which differentiate them from the Mestizos (Hale and Gordon, 1987). These include subsistence strategies (for example, gill net fishing and rotational shifting cultivation), religious practices (for example, Moravian Christianity), the use of English, and resentment of both the Nicaraguan nation-state's occupation of the region in 1894 and models of political participation and economic development imposed on the region from Managua (Hale, 1994). The Creole and Garífuna minorities are therefore classified as indigenous in this report.

The last INEC census in 1995 put the population of the RAAN at 192,716 of whom Gonzalez (1998) estimates 45% are Miskitu, 50% Mestizo, 2% Creole, and 2% Mayangna.²⁰ The population of the RAAS was estimated by INEC in 1995 at 272,252 of whom, according to González, 54% are Mestizo, 30%

²⁰ The demography of the RAAN in particular has been greatly complicated by the large-scale population movements during the War in the 1980s. During this time thousands of Miskitus, particular those along the Río Coco, into Honduras while others were resettled in the model villages at Tasba Pri some way south in the savannah country. Although many people have now returned to their homes, there are still many who have not.

Creole, 11.6% Miskitu, 1.1% Mayangna, 0.7% Rama, 0.7% Garífuna, and 0.2% others. These figures (for both the RAAN and the RAAS are presented in Tables 1 and 2.²¹

The population of the RAAS has dramatically grown in recent decades. This is primarily due to immigration from Spanish speaking Mestizo campesinos from the central departments of Boaco, Chontales and Matagalpa both into the western municipalities of Paiwas, El Rama, Nueva Guinea, Muelle de los Bueyes, and the town of Bluefields. According to INEC the population of the RAAS has grown remarkably quickly; from 90,520 in 1971, to 186,117 in 1987, to 272,252 in 1995.²² This is particularly evident in the four western municipalities (especially Rama and Paiwas) where, according to INEC statistics, the population has risen from 118,422 in 1987 to 189,759 in 1995, a factor easily attributable to the advancing agricultural frontier. Plans to create a new department from the predominantly Mestizo municipalities of Nueva Guinea, Muelles de las Bueyes, Rama and Paiwas in the west of the region are presently under review. If the 189,759 inhabitants of the western municipalities, almost all Mestizo, are given their own department, the indigenous peoples of the new, smaller rump RAAS would possibly collectively constitute a small majority.

The estimates presented in Table 2 for the Miskitu and Creole populations of the RAAS seem way too high. Figures of about half those given would probably be more accurate. On the other hand the Mestizo population for the RAAS is probably considerably larger than Gonzalez's estimates. Taking into account only those municipalities in the RAAS with sizeable indigenous populations (see Table 4), a recent SILAIS report (Table 3) estimates the populations more realistically for the RAAS Miskitus and Creoles at 15,326 and 20,690 respectively.²³ INEC (1995) has also conducted a survey of mother-tongues spoken by the RAAN and RAAS populations (Table 4.). The figures in this survey are indicative of the size of the indigenous populations but should be treated with caution since the relationship between ethnic identity and language is rather complex in many parts of the region.²⁴

In the RAAN indigenous people are particularly numerous in Puerto Cabezas, parts of the savannah and the areas around the mines, and along the Río Coco and Caribbean coastline. The Mayangna communities are found in the forest areas near the mines as well as Rosita and Bonanza towns, while the Miskitu communities are located mainly on the coast, the Río Coco, the savannah and, along with much smaller Creole minorities, in the urban centers of the region. The Mestizos in the RAAN are particularly numerous in the western municipalities of Siuna and Waslala, areas through which the agricultural frontier has already passed, or is passing.²⁵ There also exists an excellent survey by Buvollen and Almquist

²¹ They are based on this researcher's calculation of Gonzalez's percentages for the indigenous populations within INEC's total figures for the two regions.

²² Although the 1997 Gobierno Regional document does not give supporting evidence for their assertion that the INEC statistics are too high, their claim may well be true. High population mobility in the region often leads to individuals being counted two or more times in different households. Data from the Gobierno Regional in 1992 supports an estimate of 100,000 people for the whole RAAS (Gobierno Regional de la RAAS, 1997). Certainly Gonzalez's estimates for the Creole and Miskitu populations of the RAAN seem too high by at least a third.

²³ Note that very few indigenous people live in the western RAAS municipalities. See Table 4.

²⁴ Firstly, they tell us nothing about the size of the Rama and Garífuna populations since, like the Creoles, English is the mother tongue for almost all members of these two groups; secondly, many RAAS-based bilingual Miskitus almost certainly responded that English was their mother tongue; thirdly, some bilingual Creoles in Bluefields probably responded with Spanish; while, fourthly, many bilingual Mayangna probably responded with Miskitu or Spanish. The sociolinguistic reasons for this are discussed briefly below.

²⁵ There is also a sizeable Mestizo minority in Puerto Cabezas.

Buvollen (1994) of the RAAN districts with indigenous populations (Table 5).²⁶ The indigenous communities in the RAAS are concentrated in a number of rather more scattered districts: the shoreline barrios of Bluefields, El Bluff, Corn Island, Kukra Hill, the lower Río Grande, the Pearl Lagoon basin, Rama Cay and Monkey Point. There are also smaller and less nucleated settlements elsewhere in eastern districts of the region, particularly along the Río Grande, the Río Kukra River, Río Sequia, and Mahogany Creek, and along the coastline between Rama Creek and Monkey Point.

There now follows a brief account of each group, beginning with the Mestizos, the only population classified here as non-indigenous, and going on to discuss in turn the Miskitus, Creoles, Mayangnas, Garífunas and Ramas, after which there will be a short discussion problematizing these categorical distinctions.

1. The Mestizos

Gonzalez guesses the proportion of Mestizos among the Atlantic Coast population at 46.2%, a percentage surprising close to a 1981 estimate made by CIDCA which inversely estimates the number of non-indigenous Mestizos of the Atlantic Coast at 63.4% out of a population of 282, 081 (Vilas 1989: 2-4). The Mestizo population on the Atlantic Coast may be thought of in terms of a division of its members into three, fairly distinct ideal-typical groups. By far the largest of these is the group of poor, so-called Chontaleños, poor campesinos who have come to the region from departments further west over the course of the last four decades. Most live as farmers in the southern and western areas of the region but there are also many who have settled in Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas and other urban centers where they work as vendors, trademen or employees in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. The appearance of large numbers of Chontaleños in the region's larger towns has caused resentment among many indigenous people who perceive a widespread favoritism by Mestizo employers and administrators towards members of their own ethnic group. A second, much smaller group is composed of Mestizo families who pre-date the Chontaleños in the region, many having arrived in the period following the Zelaya's "Reincorporación" of the region into the Nicaraguan nation-state in 1894. The members of this second group are often well-educated and work in white-collar jobs. Many are relatively familiar with the life-ways of the indigenous people and some also speak Miskitu or English. A third, even smaller group is composed of administrators, principally middle-class career professionals from the Pacific coast departments, who work in the most senior administrative positions, especially in the region's ministry offices.

2. The Miskitu²⁷

The Miskitu are by far the largest of Nicaragua's indigenous groups.²⁸ When first encountered by English traders in the seventeenth century the Miskitu were restricted to the Sandy Bay and Cape Gracias a Dios districts. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, the Miskitu spread north and southwards along the Caribbean coast and westwards up the Río Coco and other rivers of the region, coming eventually to occupy much of the present-day north and eastern RAAN as well as scattered settlements in the northeastern RAAS. Most Miskitus, like their forbears, are horticulturalists and/or fishermen, living small nucleated villages along the Caribbean coast, the Río Coco and other rivers, the present-day border with Honduras), and the savannah areas between Puerto Cabezas and the Honduras border. Rural Miskitu communities are situated in the Waspam, Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka,

²⁶ Unfortunately there appears to be no equivalent for the RAAS.

²⁷ See Helms (1971), Nietschmann (1973), Howard (1993b) and Hale (1994) for detailed material on the Miskitu.

²⁸ Approximately 30,000 Miskitus live in contiguous areas of Honduras.

Desembocadura and Laguna de Perlas municipalities, as well as northeastern Jinotega. There are also many Miskitus living in many of the region's urban centers. Puerto Cabezas, the capital of the RAAN, is predominantly Miskitu and there are smaller Miskitu communities in the urban centers of Bluefields, Waspam, El Bluff, Corn Island, Kukra Hill, Bonanza, Rosita and Siuna.

3. The Creoles²⁹

Nicaragua's Creoles are the descendants of English-speaking people, both of African and European descent, who settled the Atlantic Coast between the mid-seventeenth century and the first half of this century. Most Creoles, at least those in the towns, speak fluent Spanish as well as English, and the more educated members of this group continue to play an influential role in regional business and politics, particularly in the RAAS where they are most numerous. Many, however, particularly those in the rural communities and the poorer barrios of the RAAS towns, are badly educated and poor. The principal centres of Creole occupation are Bluefields, Corn Island and Pearl Lagoon town in the RAAS. There are, however, also smaller Creole communities in the Laguna de Perlas municipality, El Bluff, Corn Island, Monkey Point and San Juan del Norte in the Department of Río San Juan on the Costa Rica border, as well as a small but influential minority in Puerto Cabezas. In Bluefields the one-time Creole majority has become a minority as Mestizo migration in the town has greatly increased over the last decades.³⁰

4. The Mayangna³¹

Until quite recently the Mayangnas were known as Sumus, the word Sumu having originally been bestowed upon a number of separate, though linguistically related, "Indian" peoples along the region's river headwaters who refused to be absorbed into the expanding Miskitu population. In recent years these peoples have rejected the name Sumu, a symbol of Miskitu derision, and now prefer to be called Mayangna. The present-day Mayangna are in fact three separate peoples each with a distinct identity: the Twahka, the Panamaka and the Ulwa. The Twahka and Panamaka, who speak closely related varieties of the same language, live for the most part in nucleated villages in the RAAN, along the rivers Waspuk, Bambana, Tungki, Santo Tomas de Umbra, the upper Wawa and along some stretches of the Río Coco. Their communities are particularly evident in the areas around the mines area and there are substantial Panamaka and Twahka minorities in the ethnically mixed mining towns of Rosita and Bonanza. The Ulwa, speaking an altogether different, though related, language, are concentrated in the RAAS. The best known Ulwa community is Karawala near the mouth of the Río Grande in the Desembocadura municipality. There, however, are also smaller communities further up the Río Grande and along the Río Sequia and Mahogany Creek, both tributaries of the Río Escondido. Because the houses in these smaller communities are rather dispersed and because their inhabitants often use Spanish both with visitors and among themselves, the presence of these so-called "Sumu-Spaniards" is little known to both RAAS government officials and social scientists. The Mayangnas, living in some of the region's most isolated areas, remain some of the most marginalized people in the region.

5. The Garífuna³²

²⁹ See Gordon (1987, 1995, 1989) for informed discussions of the Creole population.

³⁰ In recent years the Creole communities of El Bluff and Corn Island have become increasingly "overrun" by poor Miskitus.

³¹ There is at present no detailed ethnographic account of the modern Mayangna.

³² See Davidson (1980) and Perry (1991) for accounts of the Nicaraguan Garífuna.

The Garífuna (sometimes referred to as Black Caribs, Caribs or Caribe people) are a people of African and Indian descent who came to Nicaragua from Honduras at the end of the last century seeking work in the region's lumber camps. They settled in the Pearl Lagoon basin and founded the communities of Orinoco, La F_ and San Vicente where they remain to this day, practising subsistence farming and gill net fishing. When they first came to Nicaragua the Garífuna spoke their own language.³³ Nowadays, like their Creole neighbours, they speak English. However, they continue to maintain distinct customs and regard themselves as being quite different to the Creoles in spite of the fact that their subsistence patterns are very similar. Besides their communities in the Pearl Lagoon basin there are also small numbers of Garífunas in Bluefields.

6. The Rama³⁴

At one time the Rama probably occupied the entire coastline between Bluefields and the present-day Costa Rica border as well as a substantial indeterminate hinterland. Today, however, they much diminished in numbers.³⁵ Their best known community is Rama Cay, a densely populated island on Bluefields Lagoon with approximately 800 people. There are also, however, a few hamlets in the interior, along the Ríos Kukra, Maíz and Indio, as well as tiny hamlets along the coast south of Bluefields Lagoon at Cane Creek, Wiring Key and Punta Aguilar. The great majority of Ramas no longer speak the Rama language, using instead a distinctive variety of Nicaraguan English.³⁶

7. Problematizing Ethnic Classifications on the Atlantic Coast

Ethnic identities are not primordially given but are ascribed both by and to groups of people in various, often contradictory ways (Linnekin and Poyer 1992), and the distinctions between Mestizo, Miskitu, Creole, Mayangna, Garífuna and Rama, while clearcut enough at the conceptual level, are often rather less obvious on the ground. Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, and the RAAS in particular, is much like other multi-ethnic contexts in that identities are frequently negotiated rather than unproblematically given.³⁷ The Mayangnas are a case in point. Anthropologists have argued that the Miskitu population has historically been considerably augmented by Mayangna people who wished on the one hand to enjoy the relatively privileged status the Miskitu enjoyed with respect to anglophone traders and companies, and escape the stigma which Sumu identity tended to confer on them in the eyes of the region's other groups. Many Mayangna families are bilingual, living in mixed Mayangna and Miskitu communities, and the temptation for children in all but the most isolated and monolingual Mayangna communities to abandon their mother tongue and adopt Miskitu identity is strong.³⁸ In the more westerly and southerly of these communities, it is less Miskitu denigration of "Sumus" which constitutes the threat to Mayangna identity but stigmatization of "Indios" by Mestizo farmers advancing into Mayangna territory. The inhabitants of the one-time Ulwa Mayangna villages along the middle Río Grande, the Río Sequia and Mahogany Creek tributaries of the

³³ Garífuna is still widely spoken on the Caribbean coastlines of Belize, Honduras and Guatemala.

³⁴ See Loveland (1982) on the Rama of Rama Cay.

³⁵ Resettlement in Bluefields probably accounts for much of the decline in recent decades. Once in Bluefields they tend to be absorbed by the town's other ethnic groups, particularly the Creoles.

³⁶ Rama is only now spoken in Punta Aguilar, Cane Creek and Wiring Cay.

³⁷ Examples of this would include Haulover in the Pearl Lagoon basin, a one-time Miskitu community now perceived to be Creole, and Layasiksa, a one-time Mayangna village now identified as Miskitu.

³⁸ Conzemius (1932) and Helms (1971) have both mapped the decline of the Mayangna-Sumu groups at the expense of Miskitu language expansion over the centuries.

Río Escondido in the RAAS, for example, have all but abandoned their mother tongue and now uniformly speak Spanish. Some Miskitus in the RAAS refer to these 'accultured' Ulwas as 'Sumu-Spaniards'.³⁹

Ethnic identities are also complex, though for rather different reasons, in the Pearl Lagoon basin. This district contains 6,253 people (INEC 1997), most variously identified as Creole, Miskitu and Garífuna according to language usage, village of origin and a number of other factors. Although Pearl Lagoon basin people evidently make a great deal of these distinctions, there is considerable evidence to suggest that these categories are actually rather fuzzy and negotiable, particularly since marriages between members of the different communities are common.⁴⁰

Ethnic identity tends to be equally complex among the urban populations of the Atlantic Coast. Although children in Bluefields, for example, tend to use the language of their parents (Spanish in the Mestizo barrios, English in the Creole barrios), almost all Creole children are English-Spanish bilinguals. Although those who eventually go to work within the Creole communities, particularly the sea-focused occupation, tend to remain Creole, many members of the significant middle-class Creole minority, who use Spanish at work, tend to emphasise a Nicaraguan identity before their Creole identity and use Spanish as much as they do English.⁴¹ This desire to emphasise a middle-class national identity through the use of Spanish is also true of many comparatively well-to-do Miskitus in Puerto Cabezas. Among the poorest sections of Puerto Cabezas society, however, there is if anything a tendency for Mestizos to assimilate towards the numerically dominant Miskitu population, as children with Spanish-speaking parents find the use of the Miskitu language an advantage in dealing with the majority Miskitu-speaking population of the town.⁴² In Bluefields (and other urban centers) English-speaking Miskitus, Ramas and Garifunas find that the identities they are comfortable with in their home villages are either stigmatized or misunderstood. Consequently they sometimes de-emphasise their home identities and present themselves or "pass" as Creoles.⁴³

In summary it is probably true to say that the least problematic instances of ethnic affiliation are to be found in the RAAN Miskitu communities in the RAAN, especially those where people work in occupations (such as fishing) which are hardly practiced by the immigrant Mestizo population. More problematic examples of ethnic ascription are found in (a) the RAAS where differing identities are frequently found in close proximity, (b) the urban centers with their 'mixed' populations, and (c) those communities situated close the advancing agricultural frontier.

³⁹ Buvollen's otherwise exhaustive account of the location of the Mayangna-Sumu villages in Nicaragua makes no mention of these communities. The only Ulwa community which he and other social scientists have made mention is the 'mixed' Ulwa and Miskitu village of Karawala on the lower Río Grande.

⁴⁰ During the last hundred years, however, the numerical and cultural dominance of the English-speaking Creole population has produced both the local extinction of the Garífuna language and a considerable threat to Miskitu identity as children in Tasbapauni, Kakabila and Raitipura refuse to speak Miskitu with their bilingual parents.

⁴¹ This does not seem to be the case of the rather smaller Creole minority in Puerto Cabezas. Because Creole identity in Puerto Cabezas is perceived there to be the language of an elite, many Creoles have worked particularly hard to maintain a distinct identity.

⁴² The ramifications of the sociolinguistic situations almost certainly determining ethnic identity in the 'mixed' mining towns of Bonanza, Siuna and Rosita, as well as Corn Island, Kukra Hill and El Bluff are extremely complex and deserve further study.

⁴³ Many bilingual Miskitus from the RAAS in fact find that they have more in common with Creoles than they do with RAAN Miskitus. Consequently it is relatively easy for them to shed their Miskitu identities if need be.

IV. REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Diagnostic reports for the Atlantic Coast (e.g. Gobierno Regional de la RAAN 1997) have tended to focus less on ethnic identity, and more on the region's districts and municipalities regardless of the particular ethnic affiliations of the inhabitants. This is largely, we believe, a legacy of the radical modernization and class-based approaches to development taken by the Somoza and FSLN administrations respectively, both of which tended to de-emphasise cultural factors which might impact on the implementation of development strategies at the expense of crudely universalist top-down visions of development. Little account was taken of the specific practices employed by the region's indigenous peoples, let alone consideration given to how they might be enhanced, and consequently the very real differences between these indigenous subsistence strategies and those employed elsewhere in other parts of the country were never adequately highlighted as factors to be considered in development planning. This, we feel, is important since it is precisely the importation of these non-subsistence strategies which provides the most serious threat to the long-term economic sustainability of the region. We therefore consider it useful to present a brief descriptive typology of the most distinctive of the various indigenous subsistence strategies as these are practiced in the Atlantic Coast's sub-regions today, including the urban centers, before continuing in later sections of this report to consider the damage done to the region by non-sustainable practices.

1. The Río Coco⁴⁴

The Río Coco constitutes the frontier between the RAAN and Honduras. It is distinctively characterized by a string of predominantly Miskitu villages on the Nicaraguan side (in an area more or less co-extensive with the municipality of Waspam) whose inhabitants depend primarily on annual harvests of rice and beans. These crops are planted on small plots of land on the Honduras side of the river and harvested in November (rice) and January (beans). Many of the area's farmers also raise livestock and these are generally kept on the Nicaraguan side of the river in order to stop them feeding on other's people's crops. Subsistence activities include the raising of bananas, plantains and dasheen (which grows well in the area's swampy land), fishing and a little hunting. Because most of the surrounding lands are low lying, however, there is little cultivation of cassava, the staple of indigenous peoples living on the coast and in the savannah to the south.

The small market town of Waspam, by far the largest community on the Río Coco, has economic significance because it is situated at the junction of the river and the only driveable road running south to Puerto Cabezas, the destination of much of the river's produce. Farmers from the river's villages frequently bring produce to Waspam, usually by canoes which are either paddled or propelled by in-board motors. A few indigenous people, mainly based in Waspam, make money specializing in transporting commodities and crops, both to and from the river's smaller communities and to and from Puerto Cabezas and points south, while others make a little money through small-scale retail operations, especially in Waspam itself.⁴⁵ Waspam, however, is not the only market town on the river. Sometimes the Río Coco farmers sell their rice and beans to Honduran buyers who come south by road to the small Nicaraguan frontier town of Leimus located several miles upriver from Waspam offering better prices. The

⁴⁴ See Helms (1971) for an account of life in Asang on the upper Río Coco.

⁴⁵ The communities along the river are conceptually divided into those situated above (*río arriba*) and those located below (*río abajo*) the town.

susceptibility of the vitally important rice crop to both devastating floods and droughts means that some years are marked by considerably more deprivation than others. Among the problems experienced by the people on the Río Coco, particularly stark ones are the lack of silos, threshers in proper working order, and reliable markets. During the fieldwork phase of this report the IDSIM office in Puerto Cabezas was drawing up plans to try and address these issues with respect to rice cultivation.

2. The Coastal Fishermen⁴⁶

The inhabitants of the coastal villages, residing within the municipalities of Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka, Desembocadura del Río Grande, Laguna de Perlas and Bluefields, are uniformly Miskitu in the RAAN, and Miskitu, Creole, Garífuna or Rama in the RAAS. Most families in these communities subsist by practicing a mixture of artesanal gill net fishing and small scale rotational swidden agriculture, generally relying on cassava as the staple, as well as ñampi, yams, sweet potatoes, dasheen, bananas, plantains, sugar cane and pineapples, conditions permitting.⁴⁷ During the rainy season months between May and December, men in the lagoon villages, usually working in teams of three or four, fish for snook, coppermouth, drummer, and jack. During the lagoon flood times between July and August they catch white shrimp; and during October they go to the lagoon bars looking for sea shrimps. These so-called "first class fish" and shrimp are then sold for cash to buyer/wholesalers with either processing and storage facilities or transportation (Tansjs 1988, 1989).⁴⁸ Some men, also working in teams of three and four, also go to the small offshore desert islands known as the Cays in order to catch turtles and collect coconuts.⁴⁹

A small number of richer indigenous people are full-time fishermen or work out to sea setting lobster traps. Though potentially rather profitable, this work involves a high expenditure on capital intensive goods (in-board motors, traps, gasoline, etc.) and is considered economically risky. The failure to catch anything (and the consequent waste of gasoline) often proves financially disastrous to the typically undercapitalized fishermen involved in this line of work. Some younger men from these communities are employed by wealthy boat owners to dive for lobster. Diving is lucrative but also damaging to health and many young men have become paralysed or been killed in compression-related accidents caused by failures, mainly on behalf of employers, to observe basic safety procedures.

The fish and shrimp catches are considerably more reliable than the Río Coco rice harvests and the coastal fishermen are generally a little wealthier than indigenous people living in other areas. On the other hand, more expenditure on capital intensive equipment and risk is involved in sustaining their way of life. There are considerable threats to the coastal fisherman's livelihood including thefts of equipment, particularly gill nets and traps which have to be left out to sea overnight, and forest fires which destroy both cultigens and useful trees.⁵⁰ Over-fishing is also a problem in some areas, and indigenous people's organizations (including the Consejo de Ancianos and UCOOPESCLP) have been vocal in demanding government action to stop unlicensed boats from other countries illegally exploiting the region's marine resources. There is already an annual three-month ban on catching turtle throughout the region and there are currently calls among indigenous people for a similar ban to protect the declining lobster population.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See Nietschmann (1973) for an account of subsistence on the coastal village of Tasbapauni.

⁴⁷ May is the planting season for cassava.

⁴⁸ Most of these fish are later consumed by tourists in other parts of the Caribbean.

⁴⁹ There are vigorous local markets for both turtlemeat and coconuts.

⁵⁰ Most forest fires take place in the dry season month of April. During this period the farmers burn their plots of land in order to prepare for planting in May.

⁵¹ The over-exploitation of lobster is perceived to be a particularly serious threat.

At the same time the members of many smaller indigenous villages resent the municipally-collected taxes which they pay on their catches being channelled to the development of the larger, more readily accessible communities.

3. The River Farmers⁵²

Whereas the villages along the relatively densely populated Río Coco banks are often large the communities on the banks of the region's smaller rivers, including the Río Coco's tributaries, are typically little more than hamlets. Conditions along these rivers vary considerably, but most river dwellers depend on shifting horticulture (cassava, rice, bananas, plantains, dasheen, *ñampi*, yams and/or sweet potatoes), some hunting and fishing. Some also raise livestock. Miskitu villages corresponding to this type tend to be situated along the lower reaches of the RAAN's rivers in the municipalities of Prinzapolka and the Desembocadura, while Mayangnas settlements are situated both upstream of these in the municipalities of Bonanza and Rosita, and along some of the remoter tributaries of the Río Escondido and Río Grande in the Desembocadura, La Cruz, Tortuguero, Laguna de Perlas and Bluefields municipalities of the RAAS. River dwelling Ramas tend to live along the Ríos Kukra, Indio and Maíz, also situated in the Bluefields municipality.

A major problem faced by river communities is lack of access to metropolitan markets. Many of these farmers are productive and in good years grow surpluses for which there are markets in the towns. However, roads to the markets in Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields and the mining towns are by and large non-existent. The river farmers therefore depend on occasional long and arduous canoe trips or middleman buyers with motorized river transport. The offices of regional and national government often consider these communities too remote to service and so many, particularly in the RAAS areas south of Bluefields, have ready access to neither schools, health centers or police.

The indigenous communities along the thinly populated rivers have experienced the brunt of the eastwards advance of the agricultural frontier. Many of the riverbanks in the region, particularly in the southern and western districts, are now subject to intense exploitation by Mestizo campesinos and cattle raisers, some of whom have managed to acquire suppletory land titles to lands traditionally farmed by indigenous people. The indigenous peoples thus affected have found it hard to defend their interests. Many live far from the administrative centers, both regional and municipal, to which they might take complaints. Furthermore, many of their farms are fairly dispersed and so vigilance is particularly difficult. Under this pressure many members of these communities are either having to assimilate into the burgeoning Mestizo communities and adapt to the frequently unsustainable farming techniques practiced by the latter in order to survive.

4. The Savannah Communities⁵³

A considerable area west of the RAAN coastline and south of the Río Coco is characterized by savannah and pine forest. This area, a 1,730 square mile triangle between the Río Coco, the Río Wawa and the coast, lying within the municipality of Puerto Cabezas, has little in the way of good soil and is consequently fairly sparsely populated. The inhabitants of this area, mostly Miskitus, rely on cassava since the poor

⁵² Sections of Vernooy (1992) describe life on the Kukra River.

⁵³ See Howard (1993b) for subsistence and marketing among the Miskitu of Santa Marta and Auhya Pihni on the Puerto Cabezas-Waspam road.

quality of the soils makes the cultivation of other crops difficult.⁵⁴ The people in the savannah communities are among some of the poorest in the region. As with the inhabitants of the river communities lack of access to the cash economy presents a continually pressing problem. In the case of the savannah dwellers, however, it is the paucity of marketable products which constitutes the major difficulty rather than absence of infrastructure or distance from Puerto Cabezas. A few savannah dwellers manage to supply a little meat, either livestock or game, to the markets in Puerto Cabezas and Waspam, while some work in activities servicing the needs of the local timber and transport industries or commute to Puerto Cabezas to work in typically poorly paid jobs.

5. Urban Communities⁵⁵

Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas, regional capitals of the RAAS and RAAN respectively, are by far the largest towns on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.⁵⁶ Both towns were economically busiest during the latter part of the last century and the first thirty years of this century during which time the region as a whole experienced logging and rubber booms. Since the 1950s both towns have gone into decline and have experienced long depressions, characterized by high rates of unemployment (sometimes reported as being as high as 90% in Puerto Cabezas) and underemployment, which continue to the present. Today both Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas are mainly important as administrative centers for the two autonomous regions and market towns for the surrounding hinterlands.

In Puerto Cabezas perhaps 70% of the population are Miskitu and 5% Creole. The remaining 25% are predominantly Mestizo.⁵⁷ Members of the majority Miskitu population tend to be employed, or underemployed, in a variety of unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. Very few, however, work in white-collar occupations. These tend to be dominated by the Mestizo minority, and to a lesser extent by a small but influential Creole elite. The mining towns of Bonanza and Rosita (and to a lesser extent Siuna) in the western RAAN are ethnically quite mixed with populations of various sizes of Mestizos, Miskitus, Creoles and Mayangnas (see Table 5 for estimates). Once again the Mestizos and Creoles in these communities have considerably more access to white collar employment than the Miskitus and Mayangnas. Many people in all three communities are presently unemployed. Only the mines owned by Hemco in Bonanza are presently working and consequently many Miskitus and Mayangnas in these towns are only able to find work as temporary laborers or small-scale vendors of local produce.

In Bluefields the Mestizos constitute a 65% majority approximately. Of the remainder some 30% of the population are Creole, 2 or 3% Miskitu, and smaller percentages still Garífuna, Rama and Mayangna.⁵⁸ In Bluefields the Creole minority is much more numerous than in Puerto Cabezas and consequently has a higher profile in the white collar professions.⁵⁹ Many Bluefields Creoles, however, like the town's Miskitu

⁵⁴ Although many communities in this area are situated on the banks of rivers, they are in many respects different to those communities living by rivers in the broadleaf forest areas discussed in the previous section.

⁵⁵ See Vernooy (1992) for both Creoles and Mestizos in Bluefields and Muñoz (1992) for the Miskitu barrio of Cocal in Puerto Cabezas.

⁵⁶ Thousands of refugees swelled the populations of both towns during the war, and it is not at all clear how many of these returned to their own communities once hostilities ceased. The arrivals of hurricane refugees and campesinos migrants to Bluefields in particular has also hindered accurate quantification. Population figures for both towns should therefore be treated with extreme caution. INEC estimates for the municipalities in which these towns are located are given in Table 3.

⁵⁷ A very small number of Mayangna-Sumus also live in Puerto Cabezas.

⁵⁸ In Bluefields the indigenous peoples tend to live in the barrios situated along the shore.

⁵⁹ There is also a larger working class Mestizo population in Bluefields than in Puerto Cabezas.

and Rama minorities, are unemployed or underemployed in occupations centered on fishing and the sea. The urban centers of Corn Island and the El Bluff (the port of Bluefields on the opposite side of the lagoon) are maritime communities supplying Nicaraguan and Honduran lobster and fish boats with crew members and divers. At one time both communities had Creole majorities, and the Creole population of Corn Island (with sea-fishing and the region's only tourist industry) was relatively prosperous. In recent years, however, Miskitus prepared to work for low wages have arrived in both communities large numbers and these now constitute majorities. The semi-agricultural town at Kukra Hill in the RAAS is populated in about mainly by Mestizos though there are also significant numbers of Creoles and Miskitus. At one time Kukra Hill was an important exporter of bananas. Nowadays there is a large sugar refinery there providing employment. Indigenous people in Kukra Hill also supply local demands for African palm oil, agricultural produce and livestock. Quite a few people in the Kukra Hill area also cultivate small plots of land, including some Mestizos whose farms are now beginning to encroach on lands traditionally belonging to the communities of Haulover and Pearl Lagoon.

V. RIGHTS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The legal situation with regard to communal rights to land and natural resources is greatly complicated by the fact that at present there are a number of forms of land tenure operating in the two Atlantic Coast regions, each administered entirely independently of the others. The potential for contradictory claims is consequently large. The following is a simplified typology of these forms of land tenure:

1. National Land

The national lands belong to the Nicaraguan state. The Gobiernos Regionales and Consejos Regionales are guaranteed the right, as set out in the Autonomy Statute of 1987, to grant or deny approval to companies or individuals seeking concessions to extract natural resources in these areas.⁶⁰ National lands are administered by the Administración Forestal del Estado (ADFOREST), a body attached to the Ministerio del Recursos Naturales y del Medio Ambiente (MARENA).⁶¹ National lands in the region are primarily unexploited forest but much of it is already illegally cleared and squatted by Mestizo campesino farmers.

2. The Communal Lands of the Indigenous Communities

Communal lands are inalienable properties belonging to particular indigenous communities. They are protected by articles 5, 89, 91 and 180 of Nicaragua's Constitution, as well as articles 11 and 36 of the Autonomy Law (see Appendix B), which also emphasise that rights to the exploitation of natural resources on these lands belong to the members of these communities.⁶² These same articles of law also protect indigenous communities to lands without title provided these lands are traditionally used, as the Awastingni case discussed below demonstrates.

3. Privately Owned Land

There are a considerable number of private titles to land in the region. Most of these are suppletory titles (*títulos supletorios*) issued in recent years by the Instituto Nicaraguense de Reforma Agraria (INRA), a body attached to MARENA, who are presently attempting the registration and legalization of occupied lands. Many titles of this kind have been issued to campesino farmers on the agricultural frontier seeking legal recognition of lands they have cleared so that they can sell them on to cattlemen once the lands are exhausted. Unfortunately there seems to be no mechanism allowing INRA officials to check whether applications for suppletory titles produce conflicting claims with either existing communal land titles or claims to untitled lands which constitutionally belonging to indigenous communities through traditional

⁶⁰ According to Roldán Ortega (1996) the lagoons and rivers of the regions are also formally property of the state, while the subsoils and continental platform also belong to the Nicaraguan state, rights of exploitation being granted by MEDE-MINAS and MEDE-PESCA respectively. Our reading of the provisions of the Autonomy Law suggest that in fact rights of exploitation to these also require approval from the RAAN or RAAS Gobiernos Regionales.

⁶¹ At present ADFOREST is involved in measuring and setting the boundaries of these areas.

⁶² Most, though not all, of the titles to these communal lands were issued between 1915 and 1925 according to the principles outlined by the Harrison-Altamirano Treaty of 1905.

usage.⁶³ Consequently a significant, though unquantified, number of titles have been issued for lands which properly belong to a number of indigenous communities. In some areas of the RAAS, particularly in the Monkey Point district traditionally farmed and occupied by both Creoles and Ramas, the projected interoceanic Dry Canal and likely indemnification of landowners has led to a vigorous speculation in these titles.⁶⁴

4. Illegal Settlements

Settlements without title are by and large found on the campesino agricultural frontier. They are mostly found in lands belonging to the Nicaraguan state. However, they are also appearing increasingly often in communal lands belonging to the indigenous communities. The occupants of these lands often become applicants for the suppletory titles issued by INRA. It should be re-emphasised that indigenous settlements in untitled lands do not constitute illegal settlements, and are in fact protected by both the Constitution and the Autonomy Law, as the Awastingni case discussed below has conclusively established.

5. Cooperative Lands

There exist a number of cooperative land titles in the two regions, most of which were issued during the FSLN administration in the 1980s. These are very few in number and their numbers are not increasing. They do not therefore constitute a threat to indigenous communal lands.

It should be emphasised that the typology of forms of land tenure given above is rather simplified. Complicating factors include the followings: (a) communal titles, cooperative and individual issued between 1963 and 1979 were issued by IAN, while those issued between 1981 and 1989 were issued by MIDINRA and INRA; (b) some individual titles were granted by municipality offices; (c) some titles were issued as notary titles by the state; finally (d) there are a few titles which predate all the above, some issued by the Miskitu Kings before the region's reincorporation into the Nicaraguan state in 1894 (Roldán Ortega, 1996).⁶⁵ The collation, review and assessment of all these titles, perhaps by the CNDT (see below), is clearly an enormous task, one made all the more difficult by the sheer remoteness of much of the region and the fact that the titles and claims are filed in a number of different offices.⁶⁶

The Nicaraguan government is presently committed to the promotion of agriculture as the means of both modernizing the country and alleviating poverty. The logic of this is that the modernization of agriculture increases productivity, lowers the cost of producing food, and thereby increases incomes for small-holders, cattle ranchers and commercial farmers, while guaranteeing inexpensive food to people living in the country's towns and cities (RoN 1998a: 3). This policy is supported by INRA who are attempting to document and rationalize agricultural expansion by issuing suppletory land titles to farmers who clear previously "unoccupied" lands, some of which are thought mistakenly to be national lands when they are in fact titled or untitled communal lands theoretically protected by law. The government emphasis on, and encouragement of, agricultural growth is potentially threatening to the small numbers of indigenous peoples

⁶³ The government's desire for INRA to speed up the titling process (RoN 1998a: 31) without adequate demarcation of communal land must constitute a concern for the members of indigenous communities.

⁶⁴ Monkey Point the proposed Caribbean port for the Dry Canal.

⁶⁵ See Programa RAAN-ASDI-RAAS (1998) for a compendium of the laws and articles relating to the rights of the indigenous communities with respect to property and natural resources.

⁶⁶ The World Bank (1997: 14-15) has also made \$2.5 million available to the CNDT.

living the Atlantic Coast region, because the forests which lie close to their communities, lands which they sustainably use, are targeted by large numbers of small-holders, cattle ranchers and commercial farmers as sites of future exploitation.⁶⁷

Nicaraguan government representatives are aware that the eastward advance of large numbers of farmers into lands traditionally used by members of sparsely populated indigenous communities constitutes a threat both to those national biodiversity and the indigenous communities themselves, and they have expressed the will to do something about it (RoN 1998a: 5).⁶⁸ Presently, however, little is being done. Members of indigenous organizations and lobby groups, such as the Consejo de Ancianos, the Ten Communities, YATAMA and SUKAWALA are therefore demanding legislation which will both rationalize the national system of land tenure, ratify existing communal land titles and establish new titles for communities which at present do not have them (see also Hale 1992). These measures, they hope, will prevent INRA issuing campesino farmers with suppletory titles to areas of land which have previously been granted to the communities or individuals by other government offices, and establish titles to lands traditionally used by indigenous communities which have hitherto been untitled. In the meantime many indigenous leaders have taken steps of their own. Many have made visits to the land registry office at Bluefields in order to obtain copies of communal titles and have planted boundary stones.⁶⁹ Most, however, regard these measures as insufficient in the long term and there are now vociferous demands, both from individual communities and organizations, such as the Consejo de Ancianos, for government action based on the forthcoming findings of the Comisión Nacional de Demarcación de Tierras del as Comunidades Indígenas (CNDT) set up by the Presidential Office in response to requests from the World Bank Global Environmental Facility (GEF).⁷⁰

It should also be emphasized that it is not only the threat of squatters which is worrying indigenous people in the rural communities. Members of these communities have also been concerned that companies, mainly foreign, are illegally being granted concessions by government ministries such as the Ministerio del Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MARENA) to extract natural resources from lands traditionally used by indigenous communities.⁷¹ Recently, however, the indigenous communities have won an important case on precisely this issue, a victory which, it is hoped, will set a legal precedent. This important case involved the Mayangna community of Awastingni, one of many indigenous communities who lack titles to the lands traditionally used by their members.⁷²

In spite of the fact many indigenous communities do not have titles, they do, as noted above, enjoy explicit legal protection to these lands under articles 5, 89, 91 and 180 of the Constitution, as well as articles 11 and

⁶⁷ Deforestation in the region is estimated by the World Bank (1997: 2) at 80,000 hectares a year or about 2.1% of the country's remaining forest cover.

⁶⁸ "indigenous people, such as the Sumu and Miskito, have been managing natural resources for centuries. Our research system has much to learn from them in the management of natural resources and in the design of tilling practices with a gentle impact on the environment. We will set up a program in which indigenous and modern agricultural researchers work side by side developing practices of tilling and management for forests and for degraded lands" (RoN 1988a: 23).

⁶⁹ Land titles for both the RAAN and RAAS have to be registered in Bluefields. At present there is no land registry office in Puerto Cabezas.

⁷⁰ The request by the GEF for the CNDT is one of the conditions for the implementation of World's Bank's ABC project put before the Nicaraguan government (see World Bank 1997).

⁷¹ "[P]roperty rights to trees and to the land on which trees stand rest with households, firms, and with communities rather than with the state. They and they alone have the right to cut and use the trees" (RoN 1998a: 22).

⁷² See Acosta (1996) for a detailed discussion of the Awastingni case.

36 of the Autonomy Statute, which emphasise the rights of indigenous peoples to lands they have traditionally occupied and worked (see Appendix B). These rights, the community of Awastingni claimed in a recent case, had been violated by MARENA because the ministry was about to award a thirty year concession to exploit 62,000 hectares containing stands of the most desirable woods to the logging company Sol del Caribe S.A. (SOLCARSA), a subsidiary of the Korean company Kumkyung Co., Ltda, to exploit timber stands in the Wakumbai area in order to produce plywood,⁷³ much of which lay within lands traditionally claimed by the community of Awastingni, and the community took the unprecedented step of applying from the Tribunal de Apelaciones de Matagalpa for an injunction, under the terms set out in the Ley de Amparo, on the basis that MARENA had not consulted the people of Awastingni. This injunction, it was hoped, would (a) deny the concession to SOLCARSA, (b) stop SOLCARSA working in the area until the matter was legally settled, and (c) initiate talks between Awastingni and SOLCARSA if the latter insisting in pursuing the case. The injunction was denied and the community took the matter to the Corte Suprema de Justicia de Nicaragua, applying on the 22nd of September 1995 for an injunction from the Sala Constitucional de la Corte. In desperation and fearful that a procrastinating Sala Constitucional's decision would come too late, the community of Awastingni put a petition to the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) of the OEA (Organización de Estados Americanos), claiming that the government of Nicaragua had failed to protect the human rights of the people of Awastingni. This petition was signed by representatives of a number of other indigenous communities and invoked article 46 of the Nicaraguan Constitution which pledges support to the principles set out by the OEA.

In spite of Awastingni's efforts, on the 13th of March 1998, the minister for MARENA, Claudio Guitiérrez, signed the concession. It had not, however, been signed with the approval of the full Consejo Regional of the RAAN, and was thus in violation of article 181 of the Constitution which obliges the state to obtain this approval in the autonomous regions,⁷⁴ and in March 1996 the community of Awastingni put a formal request to the Consejo Region requesting official recognition and demarcation of Awastingni lands, based on a census and survey of the land. They also proposed that the concession to SOLCARSA be suspended while this request was being properly evaluated and investigated.⁷⁵ Finally in January 1997 the Corte Suprema de Justicia de Nicaragua declared the SOLCARSA concession to be illegal. MARENA and SOLCARSA fought the court order but in February 1998 the Corte Suprema de Justicia again ordered the concession dissolved and in March SOLCARSA closed its operation.⁷⁶ Although this is clearly a victory for indigenous people, setting a precedent in Nicaraguan law for indigenous communities without title and further strengthening the position of titled communities, indigenous leaders are well aware that they have to remain vigilant and that untitled lands used by indigenous peoples all too easily become defined as state-owned lands.⁷⁷

In August 1996, in response to requests made by the Atlantic Biological Corridor (ABC) project of the World Bank, the Presidential Office of the Republic of Nicaragua, set up the Comisión Nacional de

⁷³ This concession, it is claimed, would have destroyed 150,000 acres of rainforest.

⁷⁴ MARENA claimed that it did have approval from the RAAN Consejo Regional but it turned out that it had only obtained approval in the form of two signatures and not the whole council, thus according to Acosta (1996) violating article 181 of the Constitution.

⁷⁵ SOLCARSA would be invited to discuss the matter with Awastingni, OSICAN and MARENA, while the Consejo Regional would invite the ICHR of the OEA to participate in the formulation of an agreement.

⁷⁶ In any case the parent company Kumkyung had been bankrupted in the Korean stock market crash.

⁷⁷ Most of the rural Garífuna and Creole communities lack land titles. This is probably because the Nicaraguan government, in attempting to fulfil the conditions of the Harrison-Altamirano Treaty of 1905, were more concerned with providing titles for Indian communities.

Demarcación de Tierras del as Comunidades Indígenas (CNDT) in order to devise a plan for the proper demarcation of indigenous communal lands.⁷⁸ A major criticism of the CNDT made by indigenous leaders, however, has been that it is composed of very few representatives of indigenous communities.⁷⁹ The Consejo de Ancianos, the SWARAH Commision and IMSCO have pressed for more representative membership and have suggested to MARENA and ADFOREST that it be composed of two Miskitu delegates, two Mayangna, one Rama, one Garífuna, one from MARENA, one from INETER, one from the State Attorney, and two from the Gobiernos Regionales (RAAN and RAAS).⁸⁰

In addition to land tenure and rights to terrestrial resources, indigenous people are also concerned about the unauthorized extraction of marine resources from the Caribbean coast, an area traditionally exploited by indigenous artesanal fishermen. The state has managed to enforce a ban on commercial turtling and a close season on artesanal turtling, but has failed to stop unlicensed boats (many Honduran and Colombian) from taking lobster from the region. This situation is complicated by the fact that many of the divers working for the pirate lobster boats are Nicaraguan Miskitus. As locals often point out, many of the fighters during the Contra war were in fact divers who had been made unemployed by government curfews and U.S. blockades. If the pirate boats were stopped large numbers of Nicaraguan divers, often rather rootless individuals, would join the ranks of the region's unemployed and possibly contribute to the region's instability.⁸¹

⁷⁸ When it met in Puerto Cabezas in December 1996 meetings hosted by the CNDT, the World Bank and the ABC Project were attended by the Comisión Indígena, the Presidente of the Consejo Regional, the Coordinador of the Gobierno Regional, various elected Consejales and representatives of the municipalities, the Minister and Deputy Minister of MARENA, and the Director of the ABC project.

⁷⁹ Initially only two of its fourteen members were representatives of indigenous communities.

⁸⁰ These demands were reiterated at the recent IX Asamblea General de Pueblos Indígenas y Comunidades Etnicas. In the meantime the Asamblea has expressed its disapproval of a pilot land demarcation study, operating outside the CNDT and without the approval of the Consejo. This "unauthorized" pilot study was initiated last year by INRA and another World Bank project working in Nicaragua.

⁸¹ Bernardino Schwartz considers that finding alternate forms of employment for divers should be considered an important part of a region-wide poverty alleviation strategy.

VI. POVERTY AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

At present the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast experience poverty in a number of ways both through lack of access to public services and the markets enjoyed by many other Nicaraguans. Besides insecurities occasioned by the recent war, natural catastrophes (hurricanes, floods and bush fires), disputes with non-indigenous migrants, logging and fishing companies over rights to land and natural resources, Nicaragua's indigenous peoples are also disadvantaged in terms of their access to credit, education, health care, adequate housing and employment opportunities.

1. Access to Credit

The IDB recognises that private investment in Nicaragua is essential for accelerating growth and reducing dependence on high levels of foreign aid (IDB 1998a). However, very few people from indigenous communities make investments large enough to assist these processes. This is not because indigenous people lack the will to invest but rather because they have no access to the kinds of credit which might support these investments, banks tending to be suspicious of (a) would-be borrowers from rural areas (often perceived to be illiterate or semi-literate), (b) the unfamiliar character of the investments sought by indigenous applicants for credit, and (c) the lack of collateral in the form of alienable land (RoN 1998a: 15-16; RoN 1998b: 16).⁸² With respect to the third of these impediments even residents of the town of Puerto Cabezas are unable to raise money through mortgaging property because the town is located on community lands which legally belong to the Miskitu village of Karata. The inability to obtain credit through the absence of private land titles which might be put up as collateral is thus a major impediment to the development of a culture of enterprise among indigenous people which deserves to be addressed.

Most indigenous people plan their lives according to complex strategies which are organized around the exploitation of particular resources during particular seasons (Nietschmann 1973). There are therefore periods of the year in which money is comparatively plentiful (for example in the weeks following the rice and bean harvests on the Rio Coco and the fishing and shrimp season on the coast). It is during these times of the year that indigenous farmers and fishermen tend to make capital-intensive purchases of in-board motors, gill nets, lobster traps, machetes, axes and so forth which improve their lives in the future and allow them to invest in even more capital-intensive investment strategies which offer higher rewards. Most indigenous people, however, are severely undercapitalized. Furthermore two or three bad years in a row or, indeed a natural disaster such as a hurricane (see Appendix C), can have severe consequences rendering farmers and fishermen unable to buy the tools which might help him recover in subsequent years.⁸³ The availability of credit, indigenous people say, would offer them some security against the bad years and opportunity during the good years, and recognizing this the Consejo de Ancianos have requested from central government the setting up of an indigenous bank. At present the government claim to be creating a Rural Credit Fund to address the needs of people in rural Nicaragua who find access to credit difficult (RoN 1998b: 16), but it remains an open question as to how far it will benefit people in indigenous communities whose farming and investment practices are likely to be unfamiliar to the managers of the fund.

⁸² In 1996 and 1997 about 60% of the credit received by small farmers in Nicaragua, indigenous and Mestizo alike, came from NGOs and development projects. Only 4% came from banks (RoN 1998a: 16).

⁸³ Vernooy (1992) and Howard (1993b) contain useful discussions of investment strategies in the RAAS and RAAN respectively.

2. Education

Enterprise is also impeded by the generally poor levels education among indigenous people. Many are functionally illiterate and consequently lack the skills to deal with banks, wholesalers and suppliers.⁸⁴ The reasons for poor levels of educational attainment among indigenous people are many. Most schools in the indigenous villages only offer primary level education up to fourth, fifth or sixth grade, and for most indigenous children from rural communities their education stops right there (Yih and Slate 1985). Ambitious parents wishing to send their children on to secondary schools in larger communities, generally find that they are unable to afford the purchases (school fees, school uniforms, and school books) demanded by these schools. They also find that the costs of board and lodging for children studying away from home are too onerous to bear. To make matters worse many indigenous children, used to being taught up to fourth grade in Miskitu, English or Mayangna (in the context of the bilingual education programs offered by the MED) speak poor Spanish (Gurdián and Salamanca, 1991). Competing with children from the towns who are fluent in Spanish, they frequently fail and have to take the year again, thereby putting further financial pressure on their parents (Freeland, 1994). Tables 6a, 6b and 7 give some idea of the drop-out rates in the region's schools, showing the numbers of children making it to sixth grade, let alone secondary school, technical school and university, are well below the national average.⁸⁵ It should be pointed out that these statistics show that children in the Mestizo-dominated municipalities are equally disadvantaged in national terms, but this is probably because many communities in these areas are so new and remote that they have still to be adequately resourced by the MED. Many of the inhabitants of these communities are itinerant farmers from the particular poorly resourced areas along the agricultural frontier where there are neither schools or health centers. Finally Table 9 offers some data on the numbers of schools, teachers, and pupils in the region's secondary schools, comparing them to those elsewhere in Nicaragua. Bearing in mind that 10.7% of Nicaragua's population live in the Atlantic Coast region, these figures clearly show that RAAN in particular has one of the poorest teacher-pupil ratios in the country (78+ to 1 in the RAAN compared to 43+ to 1 nationally).

The reasons for educational problems in the region are many. The wages offered to teachers are so low that it is hard to persuade suitably qualified people in rural indigenous communities that it is worthwhile giving up involvements in seasonal cash-generating pursuits or day-to-day subsistence activities in order to make time to teach.⁸⁶ Resignations of teachers and downsizings of school programs are therefore frequent, and the educational careers of indigenous children consequently erratic.⁸⁷ Because it is so hard

⁸⁴ The mean years of schooling in the Atlantic Coast region are only 4.59 compared to 5.85 nationally (World Bank 1997: 90). One realizes, however, that the educational distance between the region's indigenous children and children from other parts of the country is even greater when one remembers that the first four years of the indigenous child's education are unlikely to be conducted in Spanish.

⁸⁵ Unfortunately I was unable to obtain equivalent statistics for the RAAS, except the figure of a total of 50 secondary schools, many more than the 15 reported for the RAAS.

⁸⁶ Those who do teach are generally able to do so because their kin give them support. Those who lack kin group support generally find teaching jobs in rural communities very difficult.

⁸⁷ The rice and beans harvests on the Río Coco and the periodic white shrimp and sea shrimp catches (which tend to last one or two weeks) are particularly labour intensive and it is not uncommon for parents to take children out of school so that they can help with tasks associated with these kinds of work. Since it is these activities which generate much of the cash in the indigenous communities it may well be the case that a student's continuing education depends on his or her participation in these tasks.

to get suitably qualified teachers to work in remote villages, many of the teachers are in fact villagers, untrained *empíricos*, and as such are often little more educated than their pupils (Shapiro, 1987).⁸⁸

3. Health

In 1991, the most recent year for which we have reliable statistics, there were only two hospitals in the region (one in the RAAN and another in the RAAS with 71 and 188 beds respectively), and 78 health centers and puestos (smaller health posts) with only 95 beds found between four of these (INEC, 1991). Unfortunately we were unable to obtain statistical evidence for many aspects of the health situation in the RAAN. We therefore present statistical evidence from the RAAS, more specifically the eastern RAAS (Corn Island, La Cruz, Bluefields, Laguna de Perlas, Kukra Hill, Tortuguero and the Desembocadura), the municipalities with significant indigenous populations. The health centres are usually staffed by one or two doctors and a few nurses, and tend to be found in larger villages, while the puestos are usually only staffed by one or two nurses. Most villages, however, have neither facility and therefore rely on community brigadistas.⁸⁹ The brigadistas and puestos frequently lack adequate supplies of the medicines and materials needed to provide effective assistance, and so many people do not bother to go. Instead they employ the services of curanderos, bushdoctors, shamans (*sukias* or *prapits*) and snake-doctors, experts in plant remedies who provide more or less effective cures using "bush medicine" (Chow Espinoza 1987).⁹⁰ Serious illnesses and injuries demanding immediate treatment occasionally require the immediate use of fast transport by *panga* or truck. Many indigenous communities have neither, and almost none have radios to summon urgent assistance.

The most persistent health problems in the indigenous communities urban and rural alike include dengue, chronic diarrhoea, respiratory disorders, skin ulcers, malnutrition, venereal disease, alcoholism and drug addiction, though perhaps malaria is the most persistent problem (Tables 11a, 11b and 12). Infant mortality is also a serious problem in the region, partly no doubt a function of the fact that such a small percentage of childbirths take place with institutional assistance. The major threats to life during the first year of a child's life seem to be pneumonia and diarrhoea, each of these accounting for approximately 25% of all deaths to children one year old or less. Again we were unable to obtain statistics for the whole region and therefore rely on exemplary figures from the seven eastern RAAS municipalities on the causes of infant mortality (Table 13).

Some of the threats to health in the region are occupationally related. Lobster divers, for example, often become paralyzed in pressure-related accidents, while miners frequently suffer from silicosis and tuberculosis. In the Mayangna communities downstream from the mines, the illegal dumping of toxic waste continues to cause serious illnesses. Although HIV/AIDS has not specifically been identified as a serious problem yet, MINSA and SILAIS workers are well aware of the threat that it poses. Communities considered particularly at risk are Puerto Cabezas, Corn Island and El Bluff, all of which contain large numbers of Miskitu and Creole men who work at sea. HIV/AIDS is already a considerable problem in some of the Caribbean ports of Honduras, there are already a few cases in eastern

⁸⁸ The *empíricos* are intensively trained at annual, month long workshops, but domestic commitments frequently make attendance at these erratic.

⁸⁹ These are volunteers who periodically attend workshops organised by local MINSA representatives for further training. Most villages also have one or two women trained as midwives. These women attend workshops in the larger communities twice a year.

⁹⁰ Indigenous plant-based remedies from flora-rich eastern Nicaragua have excited considerable attention among ethnobotanists and pharmacists. See Barrett (1994).

Nicaragua's ports, and health workers involved in AIDS awareness campaigns and research believe that it might well in time become a serious problem in the country's Caribbean ports.

4. Women

Although men are generally considered heads of their households, indigenous women generally have a great deal of say in the day-to-day running of household affairs. It is consistently reported that the position of women among the Miskitus and Creoles, though not among Mayangnas, is generally higher than among the nation's majority Mestizo population (Muñoz, 1985). This is, no doubt, partly a consequence of the fact that in most indigenous communities, uxori-local postnuptial residence - an arrangement whereby the groom goes to live with, or near to, the bride's parents after marriage - is the moral and statistical norm (Helms, 1971). Among many village Miskitus it is also generally expected that grooms perform services for their wives' kin and this too comparatively strengthens the position of many women. Many indigenous women are actively involved in marketing and the petty sale of commodities and in most respect daughters are valued as highly as sons as Table 7 clearly shows in the context of primary level education attainment. It should be remembered that many communities do not have sixth grade education and that sending a child to another community to continue studying constitutes a sacrifice. In this respect it is interesting that parents often, though not always, invest as much in the education of their daughters as they do in their sons, a fact which is borne out in the fact that a significant number of important indigenous leaders are women.⁹¹

On the other hand the role of women, defined as childbearers and nurturers, is made very difficult by the fact that so many indigenous people, particularly Miskitus and Mayangnas, are suspicious of contraceptives which they regard as physically and morally harmful. Families, therefore, are large. Marriages, especially in the larger towns, tend to be brittle. Consequently women are frequently deserted by their partners and are left with the burden of bringing up large numbers of children.⁹² It is also true to say that domestic violence, caused indirectly to a considerable extent by the inability of many families to reproduce the conditions of a stable existence, is widespread. These phenomena have occasioned a number of indigenous women, based in Puerto Cabezas and led by Elizabeth Henriquez, to form AMICA (Asociación de las Mujeres Indígenas de la Costa Atlántica), a group devoted to publicizing and addressing these problems.

5. Crime and the Effects of War

The legacy of the Contra war, briefly discussed above, has also been a major factor contributing to the perpetuation of poverty in the region. During this period approximately ten thousand Miskitus from the Río Coco region fled into Honduras while a similar number were forceably removed to a government-sponsored resettlement area known as Tasba Pri. In other parts of the region other villages were abandoned or depopulated, as indigenous people, fearful of Contras, Nicaraguan army units, arrest and conscription, sought safety in larger communities or left the country. Those who had previously accumulated cattle lost their herds as animals were routinely requisitioned by units from both sides, and

⁹¹ For example, Myrna Cunningham, Hazel Law and Elizabeth Henriquez.

⁹² This phenomenon is much less evident in the smaller rural communities. Men in these communities tend to be more sedentary and women generally receive more support from their kinswomen.

after the re-establishment of peace many people returned to their villages only to find that all their possessions had been stolen or lost, their plantations overgrown with bush, and their houses either burned to the ground or fallen into disrepair. Many families, particularly those on the Río Coco have yet to recover from effects of the war and are still trying to rebuild their lives.

After the war it was also apparent that a whole class of widows and orphans, most still desperately poor, had been created. Many people, particularly men, had been killed or had simply disappeared. Still others had sustained serious war-related injuries which had made them economically inactive. In Puerto Cabezas in particular, and Bluefields to a lesser extent, there are now many street children some of whom, it is said, were simply abandoned during the population dislocations which followed the war. Disturbingly many of these children, some not even ten years old, are addicted to crack-cocaine.

The crack-cocaine "epidemic" of the last decade has, according to local community leaders, caused significant rises in levels of theft, violence and prostitution in both regions, and in some areas, particularly the coastal areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, has contributed greatly to weakening senses both of community stability and personal security. The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua lies across a major cocaine and marijuana trade route between Colombia and the United State, and consequently drugs, often sold remarkably cheaply or simply exchanged for local produce and services, are plentiful. Addiction to cocaine in its derivative form crack, known locally as "rock" or *piedra*, is a particularly serious problem in Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, El Bluff, Corn Island and larger rural communities on the coast such as Tasbapauni, Sandy Bay and Sandy Bay Sirpi, and in Puerto Cabezas the problem is now so severe that all traffic leaving or entering the town is routinely searched.⁹³

6. Housing

Adequate housing constitutes a major problem in many indigenous communities. Many houses (see Tables 14, 15a and 15b) are desperately overcrowded and building materials, particularly lumber and cement, have become prohibitively expensive. Hurricane Juana in October 1988, Hurricane Mitch in October 1998 (Appendix C) and the fires occasioned by the extreme dry season in 1998 have resulted in the loss of many stands of timber in the lands around many indigenous communities. Prices for ready cut lumber in Bluefields, the Pearl Lagoon basin and Corn Island, all areas effected by Hurricane Juana and/or the recent bush fires, have become so high nowadays that it is as cheap to construct a cement house as it is a lumber house. This sharp rise in the cost of building materials is a major concern among young adults living with their own parents or parents-in-law.

Most of the larger communities in the region have electricity but only Bluefields is connected to the national electricity grid. Others - for example Waspam, Pearl Lagoon, and astonishingly Puerto Cabezas - rely on locally generated power, and even in these urban centers a good number of houses are not connected to the power supply (Table 16). Many smaller rural communities were the recipients of Russian-made generators during the FLSN administration, but very few still work since replacement parts are either expensive or impossible to obtain. For most inhabitants of the region sanitary arrangements remain primitive (Tables 17a and 17b) and without doubt contribute considerably to much of the illness in the region as well as the high incidence of infant mortality caused by diarrhoea, referred to above.

7. Unemployment

⁹³ Many of those involved in these more serious drug-related crimes are said to be traumatized and well-armed former guerrillas and soldiers lacking stable home lives.

Levels of unemployment and underemployment in the RAAN and the RAAS are consistently reported to be well below the national average.⁹⁴ In 1993, for example, it was estimated that 27.3% of the population of the Atlantic Coast region were underemployed as opposed to 15.4% nationally (World Bank 1997: 90) (see Tables 18 and 19). Claims of this sort are, however, very hard to verify because there are no methodological distinctions which might usefully be made between the regularly employed, the occasionally employed, those who occasionally perform tasks for cash (*chamba*), those who work in the informal economy, those who routinely support themselves primarily through subsistence-oriented pursuits, and those who have no visible means of support at all beyond state benefits. It is, however, certainly true that the people of the region, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, complain that there is not enough paid work of any kind and consequently too little cash circulating in the region. Unemployment is particularly problematic for indigenous people living in the urban centers of Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, Bonanza, Siuna, Rosita and El Bluff. These towns in particular have gone into decline following the abandonment of the region by the overseas companies. Most people living in these towns have no access to fishing and farming to support themselves and they are therefore entirely dependent on a frequently precarious participation in the cash economy.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Open unemployment in Nicaragua is presently reckoned at 16% and underemployment at 40% (IDB1998b: 11).

⁹⁵ People in the rural indigenous communities do manage without a wage, but only as long as they are able to participate in either artisanal fishing, cash-cropping rice and beans or other activities which bring in some income. A few people in the towns receive occasional support from either kin living in the rural communities in the form of foodstuffs. A few more fortunate families receive remittances from sons and daughters working overseas.

VII. ARTICULATION WITH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

If we are to consider measures which might alleviate these manifestations of poverty it is important to consider (a) the non-indigenous institutions - both governmental and non-governmental - which are presently working towards this end, and (b) the most important indigenous organizations - political and non-political - lobbying central government, the regional governments, the ministries, the state judiciary and the international community. Furthermore the workings of these have to be situated within the parameters defined by the Nicaraguan Constitution and Autonomy Law of 1987, especially since the latter was, to a considerable extent, designed to resolve questions asked of the state by the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast.

1. Autonomy, Government and the Role of NGOs

The rights of the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast region to their own communal lands, traditional forms of social organization, customs and languages, are all theoretically protected in the Nicaraguan Constitution and Autonomy Law of 1987 (see Appendix B). The Autonomy Law also made provision for the protection of the region's peoples and resources by creating two autonomous regional governments from the former Atlantic Coast region Department of Zelaya: the RAAN (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte) and the RAAS (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur). This decentralization of government on the Atlantic Coast would, it was hoped, empower the region's inhabitants by uniquely allowing them to address regionally-specific concerns through regional forms of government to which central government institutions were theoretically accountable.⁹⁶

Following the provisions of the Autonomy Law, each of the two regions is presently governed by the Gobierno Regional and administered by a body with executive powers and responsibilities, the Consejo Regional. These Gobiernos Regionales are composed of forty-five Consejales, elected every four years, and deputies from the National Assembly (three in the RAAN, two in the RAAS). The Concejales assign one another to committees each responsible for the development and implementation of particular aspects of regional policy (e.g. economy, education, health, natural resources, women, etc.). These bodies serve both as legislators and executors of local policy, and as advisors and checks to the various central government bodies. Finally article 27 of the Autonomy Statute guarantees representation in the Gobiernos Regionales by each ethnic group including the hitherto underrepresented Mayangnas in the RAAN and RAAS, and the numerically tiny Garífuna and Rama minorities in the RAAS. Finally the RAAN and the RAAS, like the departments in the rest of the country, are further divided into municipalities, seven in the RAAN and eleven in the RAAS, whose administrations are also elected.⁹⁷ Ethnic representation is not guaranteed in the municipalities.

⁹⁶ Some of the tensions between central government ministries and the regional governments occasioned by the Autonomy Law are paradigmatically explored in the Awastingni case discussed above.

⁹⁷ Elections for municipal administrations in the regions were held for the first time in October 1996 (Programa RAAN-ASDI-RAAN 1997).

The Atlantic Coast is also served by regional offices of a number of the country's government ministries.⁹⁸ These administer the policy decisions of central government and as such have no responsibilities to either the Gobierno Regionales, Consejo Regionales or municipalities, though they are legally bound to respect the powers of the latter. There are, however, often tensions between the ministries and the Gobiernos Regionales in particular, regarding demarcation of responsibilities, consultation and policy implementation. The Gobiernos Regionales have, for example, been in conflict recently with both MARENA and INRA over rights to allocate land and natural resources in the region (see the Awastingni case discussed above), and with MED over the lack of funds made available for the Miskitu, English and Mayangna bilingual education programs in the region. These differences between the various strata of government in the region make the rational planning of sustainable development in indigenous communities both difficult and frustrating.⁹⁹ Finally indigenous leaders also complain that too many purely administrative and executive positions within the public sphere have become politicized, with civil service posts too often being tied to party loyalties. Changes of government consequently result in dismissals and serious losses of accumulated expertise ensue.

Much of the expenditure designed to help the region's indigenous communities comes from overseas. Some of this aid is administered by local offices of overseas aid agencies, as in the case of DANIDA, USAID, AMC and PROCODEFOR. These organizations have long-term commitments to projects in the region and have particular expert specializations which demand their presences in the region. Many other overseas aid organizations (for example, Oxfam and Action Aid), however, work with local NGOs, the latter becoming responsible for the ground-level planning and administration of particular projects conceptualized and funded by the former. The most important Nicaraguan NGOs with local expertise include FADCANIC, CIEETS, CEPAD, IDSIM and ADEPHCA. Many of the workers in these NGOs are from the Atlantic Coast and are therefore relatively familiar with political and social processes as these are worked out in indigenous communities. Given that so many positions in the Consejales Regionales, municipalities and ministry offices are political appointments and therefore prone to change in the aftermath of elections, these local NGOs provide the region with some much-needed institutional stability.

Many aid projects in the region's indigenous communities fail, and for various reasons. For example, NGO fieldworkers find that there are frequently tensions between their local level knowledge and expertise on the one hand, and the textbook top-down models of development which are unrealistically imposed on them by their administrations on the other. All too often NGO planning offices demand far too high levels of participation from beneficiaries, most of whom are generally very busy people. The more successful projects, fieldworkers say, are those which make realistic use of political processes at the village level and involve communities members in decision making and planning without demanding too much of their time and energies. Fieldworkers also complain that all too often the region's NGOs duplicate each other's work, initiating similar projects in the same areas without properly consulting one another, though in the RAAS at least some NGOs have sought to remedy this and have agreed to divide responsibility for particular districts among themselves.¹⁰⁰ These failures, however, tend to be perceived

⁹⁸ These include MEDE-PESCA, MEDE-MINAS, MARENA, INRA, MAG, MED, MINSA-SILAI, MITRAB, MASCRE, MCT, ENAP, INAA, ENEL, TELCOR, MINGOB, MIFIN, INSSBI, FONIF, INJUDE and INTURISMO. Some of these ministries also have offices operating at the municipal level.

⁹⁹ Though in 1996 the RAAS Gobierno Regional acquired a secretary with responsibility for the municipalities and communities (Gobierno Regional de la RAAS, 1997). See Programa RAAN-ASDI-RAAS (1997) for a report of the second phase of their program designed to confront this problem.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the Río Grande is presently divided between the NGOs PRO-RAAS, IDSIM and IBIS, each responsible for a different stretch of the river.

by the would-be beneficiaries in the indigenous communities as corruption. All they see, many say, are (a) projects failing and (b) too much money being spent on salaries and transport.¹⁰¹ Seen purely as public relations exercises, ill-conceived or poorly implemented projects in the indigenous communities do more harm than good.

2. Indigenous Organizations

It would be a mistake to view the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast as simply passive victims of either state neglect, hostility or paternalism in the years before the insurgency in the 1980s and the Autonomy Law. Indigenous peoples of the region have represented and defended themselves through various organizations for nearly forty years. Of these organizations, probably ACARIC, ALPROMISU, MISURASATA, YATAMA and the Consejo de Ancianos have been the most influential.

ACARIC originated in the 1960s in the context of demands by the principally Miskitu farmers on the Río Coco for development based on local agricultural co-operative enterprises and quickly spread to the coastal regions. The Somoza government realising that ALCARIC might easily become a political movement if its demands were not satisfied, acceded and created a number of centers throughout the region for the storage and sale of foodstuffs. In the early 1970s ALCARIC disintegrated and was replaced by ALPROMISU. Unlike ALCARIC, whose members tended to focus on issues of local economy rather than politics, ALPROMISU was vocal in arguing that the lack of Miskitu and Sumu (Mayangna) participation in the regional political process of the time was a key factor in accounting for underdevelopment in the indigenous communities, and indeed it succeeded in obtaining some decentralization of government in the region, as well as representation at the municipal and state levels. One important aspect of ALPROMISU rhetoric was its emphasis on distinctions between the Mestizos and Creoles on the one hand, who enjoyed privileged positions in the labour hierarchy, and the Miskitu and Sumu (Mayangna) on the other, who lacked access to these. ALPROMISU thus emphasised a particular view of indigenous identity as being a key factor in accounting for poverty in the region (Matamoras, 1992).

The 1979 revolution which took the FSLN to power, brought new economic and political discourses to Nicaragua and, in order to engage with these, ALPROMISU dissolved and re-emerged with a new leadership as MISURASATA.¹⁰² The alliance between the FSLN government and MISURASATA, however, was shortlived. The government made the mistake of emphasising the application of state-organized top-down development for the Atlantic Coast, and thus alienated the MISURASATA leadership who were demanding the substantive and active involvement of indigenous people in finding solutions to the problems of (a) rights to lands traditionally used by indigenous communities, (b) rights to the extraction of natural resources, (c) rights to traditional forms of culture and social organization, (d) education in indigenous languages, and above all (e) a new locally developed political process for the region (Matamoras, 1992).

In structural terms the causes of the breakdown of relations between the FSLN government and MISURASATA, resulting in the armed conflict, were twofold: firstly, the government wished to impose a style of development to the Atlantic Coast which involved very little participation by indigenous people at the levels of either planning or execution; and secondly, MISURASATA cast these differences between the government and the indigenous people of the Atlantic Coast in terms of ethnic, rather than regional,

¹⁰¹ The costs of transport in a region with few roads are very high.

¹⁰² These leaders were Steadman Fagoth, Brooklyn Rivera and Hazel Lau.

differences. A large, and potentially sympathetic, Mestizo population living on the Atlantic Coast was thus alienated by MISURASATA's frankly ethno-exclusive discourse and forced into a confrontational stance with MISURASATA (Matamoras 1992).

MISURASATA was, as noted above, primarily an organization which emphasised the rights of "Indians". Although some Creoles also fought with MISURASATA units, many, like the Mestizo population, were similarly alienated by the organization's ethno-exclusivity. In any case by the time the Revolution took place in 1979 the Creoles had already formed an organization called the Southern Indigenous and Creole Community (SICC) and it was this organization which became the focus of Creole discontent. Since most Creoles lived in urban, rather than rural, communities, SICC tended to concentrate its efforts on labour relations rather than land issues, organizing resistance to both the late Somoza and FLSN administrations through strikes and demonstrations (Freeland 1988). SICC eventually dissolved, possibly in the late 1980s, since which time there has been no Creole organization of significance to take its place.

The early-to-mid 1970s had also seen the emergence of a specifically Mayangna organization, SUKAWALA. This group originated in the mining district of Bonanza and was initially assisted by Capuchin missionaries, CEPAD and the paternalistic U.S.-based Neptune Mining Company.¹⁰³ During the MISURASATA-FSLN conflict in the 1980s SUKAWALA distanced itself from MISURASATA, whose members, many Mayangna feared, were more interested in promoting Miskitu interests than foregrounding Mayangna and Rama concerns. SUKAWALA therefore developed its own supportive though critical stance towards the government. In 1985 the government officially recognised SUKAWALA as the organization most representative of Mayangna interests and it was brought into the Autonomy process (Freeland 1988). It continues to adopt a non-political stance, focusing primarily on the protection and development of the communities which form its constituency, and should at the present moment be considered the most body most representative of Mayangna interests.¹⁰⁴

By the time peace returned to the Atlantic Coast in the late 1980s, MISURASATA had already split into three groups, KISAN, MISURA and another group who retained the name MISURASATA.¹⁰⁵ Members of these groups now joined together to create another organization called YATAMA which soon emerged as the leading political party specifically representing the concerns of indigenous people. YATAMA remains the most important political voice for indigenous people in the region. However, it is divided into a number of factions and has rarely, in the course of its short history, demonstrated a united front in presenting a critique of state policy towards the Atlantic Coast. Some of these divisions originate in the differing origins of YATAMA's various constituencies. To begin with there were important differences, for example, between those leaders such as Juan Salgado and Uriel Vanegas who helped broker the peace following the Yulu Accord, and those such as Steadman Fagoth and Brooklyn Fagoth, representing a rather larger constituency, who had initially resisted the peace.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore there were also differences between these two tendencies (mainly led by ex-comandantes), and the CUC (Comité de Unidad Costeña) tendency led by Hazel Law, Armando Rojas and Leonal Pantin who represented the views of an emerging small but significant Miskitu middle-class in Puerto Cabezas (Matamoras, 1992). Although the leaderships of most of these factions have changed the basis of their differences have not.

¹⁰³ SUKAWALA began with small-scale literacy programs and health and education projects.

¹⁰⁴ It is not clear whether SUKAWALA represents the interests of Karawala and other, smaller Ulwa communities of the RAAS.

¹⁰⁵ In fact these three tendencies were further divided. The study of these lies beyond the scope of this paper but see Matamoras (1992).

¹⁰⁶ There were, and remain, important differences between the positions taken by Rivera and Fagoth.

There are also extremely important differences based on differing perceptions of what the YATAMA constituency as a whole wants or needs. Some factions, particularly those influenced by Rivera, have inherited a view founded on ethnic distinctiveness, and continue to assert that the true proprietors of the Atlantic Coast should be the indigenous peoples and that the Mestizo population should be disenfranchised.¹⁰⁷ Other groups, particularly the CUC tendency and some of the leaders who brokered the Yulu Accord, maintain that all the peoples of the Atlantic Coast, including Mestizos, should have a stake in determining the region's development. The latter have supported the project of regional autonomy (while providing a constructive critique), have sometimes found common ground with FSLN criticisms of central government policy, have tended to resist armed demonstrations, and have been deeply suspicious of institutions such as the government ministry INDERA (once directed by Brooklyn Rivera) which they view as an unconstitutional device with which central government is able to circumvent the legitimate authority of the RAAN and RAAS Gobiernos Regionales in order to impose its own directives on the region. The other group, emphasising ethno-exclusivity, have tended to be suspicious of the Autonomy process, the Gobiernos Regionales and overtures to the FSLN opposition (Matamoras, 1992).¹⁰⁸

The opinions of individual YATAMA supporters, however, are by no means as cut-and-dried as the distinctions outlined above suggest. Rather the tendencies described above are probably best thought of as ideal typical responses expressed by different Miskitu leaders to the complexity of the region's politics, as important statements of intent or policy voiced by one are just as loudly denounced by others. To many, therefore, YATAMA seems to lack the unity of purpose which would make it more successful both as a political party and an indigenous movement.

To some extent this factionalism is clearly a consequence of the fact that YATAMA, as a political party, necessarily operates within a political framework organized around institutional forms of legitimate confrontation which have little to do with traditional indigenous concepts of action through consensus. Recognising this, indigenous leaders in recent years have sought to produce more consensual forms of political representation through the employment of traditional forms of indigenous social organization. The result has been the founding of the Consejo de Ancianos, a body elected by the leaders of many of the RAAN, and a few of the RAAS, Miskitu communities. This group is presently led by Rodolfo Rivera (President), Gamiliás Enriquez (Vice-President) and Otis Lam (Treasurer). The Consejo de Ancianos operates within Nicaraguan law but outside the state political process, and its stated aims are to defend communal property, indigenous traditions, and the region's natural resources, promote the deepening of the Autonomy process and the application of law in the region, and to develop relations with national and international organizations interested in both the region and the rights of indigenous people.

The highest authority of the Consejo de Ancianos is the General Assembly of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities which is convened every year. At the last Assembly it was attended by 800, according to the Consejo's own estimate, Miskitu leaders representing 149 communities which if true would account for a considerable proportion of the indigenous communities in the region. Most of these, however, seem to be communities located in the RAAN, no doubt a function of the Consejo's office location in Puerto Cabezas. Very few RAAS communities (other than perhaps Tasbapauni and those of the Río Grande area) seem to be represented and consequently the more southerly Miskitus, Ramas, Creoles and Garífunas seem to be unrepresented. If this situation could be remedied and equivalent

¹⁰⁷ Some people who express this view would also disenfranchise the region's Creole and Garífuna populations.

¹⁰⁸ Sometimes they have put forward these views with arms as, for example, when members of this tendency seized the police station in Wasparam in 1992.

representation established among the Mayangnas, RAAN Creoles and indigenous communities of the RAAS, the Consejo would without doubt carry even more moral authority across the region than it does at present. At present it can only claim to represent adequately the Miskitu communities of the RAAN and as such runs the risk of projecting the same ethno-exclusionist bias openly espoused by some of the more extreme YATAMA factions. This is unfortunate because in fact the Consejo do not support such a bias and have, for example, been careful to request the presence of Rama, Creole, Mayangna and Garífuna representatives on the CNDT.

The present situation might be summarized in the following terms. Quite clearly the most politically powerful and visible organization representing the interests of indigenous interests is YATAMA. This organization, however, is deeply politicized. It is also divided into a number of factions with sharp differences, some of which tend to project an ethno-exclusive stance towards the other groups in the region. For this reason YATAMA is probably best understood as a loose coalition of Miskitu-focused interests. The most representative and unified organization is certainly the Consejo de Ancianos. The credibility of the Consejo, as far as many people are concerned, lies (a) in its accountability to its members through traditional forms of social organization, and (b) in its apparently apolitical character. Its weakness, perhaps, lies in (a) its apparent lack of representation among the Mayagna-Sumu and Creole communities in the RAAN and among nearly all the indigenous communities of the RAAS.

The Mayangnas are possibly wary of the Consejo de Ancianos, just as they have been of MISURASATA and YATAMA, and prefer to represent themselves through SUKAWALA. Similarly the militant ethnic determinism exhibited by some factions of the RAAN-based organizations such as MISURASATA and YATAMA may well have fostered a degree of scepticism towards the Consejo de Ancianos among the indigenous communities lying south of the Río Grande in the RAAS. As we have noted, in the RAAS ethnic identity is considerably more complex, communities with different ethnic affiliations live and work closely with one another, and the ethnically-focused distinctions which some RAAN-based organizations have emphasised are seen by many in the RAAS to be potentially divisive. Mobilization in these communities therefore tends to find expression in appeals to local and occupational, rather than ethnically-based, loyalties, as for example in the Pearl Lagoon basin where Miskitu, Creole and Garífuna fishermen alike are collectively organized into UCOOPESCLP (Unión de las Cooperativas Pesqueras de la Cuenca de la Laguna de Perlas).

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua experience poverty and instability of many kinds, none are more serious than the threats which are posed by the advance of the agricultural frontier, the plundering of resources in lands belonging to indigenous communities, the present irregularities surrounding the issuing of land titles, and the inability of undercapitalized indigenous people to empower themselves and their communities through access to small loans. Unless these issues are addressed remedies taken to alleviate other aspects of poverty (e.g. health, education, housing) among indigenous people will only prove to be short-term fixes. This is not to say that these problems should be neglected but it is important to recognize that longer term measures to alleviate poverty, instability and insecurity among indigenous people must be taken.

The Government of Nicaragua has at last recognized, at least officially, that the advance of the agricultural frontier poses a threat to indigenous people and has recently prepared a draft National Biodiversity Strategy which includes the following recommendations:

- *improving the policy framework*, reforming legislation and coordinating the activities of MARENA, the National Assembly, the judiciary, enforcing agencies, and regional governments;
- *reducing the push factors* behind the agricultural frontier by targeting development resources to regions of high productive potential and high incidence of poverty, namely the Pacific Western Region, the Segovias Region, and the Northern Region;
- *reducing the pull factors* attracting migrants into the Atlantic by minimizing access to areas of high biological importance through: (a) investments in increasing the state presence in protected areas; and (b) recognition of indigenous land rights and demarcation of indigenous lands; and
- *stabilizing and sustaining community livelihoods* in the Atlantic by creating local incentives for sustainable biological management through: (a) fostering local democratic processes to improve the quality of public services for local communities; (b) improving the coordination and deployment of public investment targeted at the Atlantic; (c) giving local communities and municipal and regional governments a say on how resources in their jurisdiction are utilized; and (d) recognizing the rights of communities to rents generated from biological resource use."

(World Bank 1997: 3; see also 3-5 and appendix 11).

If these policies are adequately implemented, a future of far greater stability for the indigenous peoples, a great many of whom live in rural communities threatened both by the advance of the agricultural frontier and the depredations of loggers, is promised. This, it is hoped, would go a considerable way towards both "improving the policy framework" and "reducing the pull factors". Ideally, the CNDT would ensure that clearly mapped demarcations of communal lands will be placed in INRA offices from which suppletory titles are issued. This, it is hoped, would make it clear that private claims to communal lands would not receive institutional support.

There is, however, resistance in some quarters to the establishment of such a commission. Some influential figures strongly support radical pro-agricultural policies as a means of supporting the country's economy, and as such they have little interest in supporting either indigenous land rights or biodiversity programs, both of which they see as expensive luxuries. Those who share this view consider the privatization of state and communal lands as an important means by which eastern Nicaragua will be made

to contribute to the country's export drive. These arguments seem short-sighted. It is already been shown that much of the land currently in the hands of the state or the indigenous communities has little long-term agricultural value and is only fit in the longer term for very small numbers of farmers practising rotational swidden agriculture (World Bank, 1997: 1-2). The indigenous peoples of the region are currently employing this form of farming sustainably. If the agricultural frontier is allowed to overrun the communal lands and national lands close by, it will mean that the broadleaf forests in which many indigenous people farm will be lost forever. The lands on which they stand will become grazing pastures and the former inhabitants, both campesino farmers and indigenous people, will find that they have no visible means of supporting themselves. Shortages of land will lead to conflict, conflict to regional instability, and conflict and instability to the deepening of poverty among indigenous people.¹⁰⁹ It is therefore vitally important that the government takes steps to "reduce the push factors" which are driving Mestizo campesino farmers eastwards. Some attempt needs to be made therefore to turn their transitory settlements into proper communities. If sustainable farming practices could be encouraged, and health clinics, schools and other facilities built in the areas close to these settlements, proper communities might be established and the advance of the frontier might slow down.

One strategy which the Nicaraguan government has considered is the privatization of indigenous lands. One of the documents prepared by the Republic of Nicaragua delegation for the Consultative Group Meeting for Nicaragua in April, 1998 stated that "[we] will assess the possibility, in consultation with the indigenous communities, of passing legislation to allow households to buy and sell land, if they so desire, so they can accumulate assets." (RoN 1998a: 14-15).¹¹⁰ It seems highly unlikely, however, that the region's indigenous people would support an initiative of this kind. Communal land is not simply an ideological issue for indigenous people. It is also the means by which rights of usage to working and resting lands are circulated through a complex system of reciprocities in which permissions surrounding ownerships of fruit trees, fishing, hunting and gathering are all implicated (see Howard 1993a, 1993b). A straightforward division of communal lands into privately-owned plots standing outside the jurisdiction of the community simply would not work or be tolerated by the members of indigenous communities for purely practical reasons. Even the proposal of these measures would, we believe, produce strong grassroots anger and resistance.

The IDB might, therefore, consider providing support for the CNDT and the demarcation process, particularly since CNDT is supported by the most representative grassroots indigenous group in the region, the Consejo de Ancianos, perhaps with the assistance of IDB projects such as the Resolution of Property Conflicts Program and the Conservation and Management of Forestry Resources Programs. Organizations with specializations in environmental concerns such as CONADES and Pana Pana based in Puerto Cabezas might also be consulted. The "push factors" impelling the eastwards advance of the agricultural frontier alluded to could also be tackled. Work might be initiated to provide support to the campesino farmers in the frontier zones through the provision of schools, health centers and markets for sustainably farmed produce. These, we hope, would provide the conditions for the development of fixed and stable communities.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ In some parts of the region land shortages are already causing serious disputes. Mayangna leaders from the Bambana and Tungki Rivers, for example, report that invaders in their communal lands are often armed. Up in the Miskitu villages on the upper Río Coco there are rumours of intended reprisals for those who enter community lands uninvited.

¹¹⁰ There is also an influential lobby of pre-revolution, private landholders from the Somoza administration period who wish to reclaim lands situated in community properties which they argue are theirs.

¹¹¹ This topic deserves a report of its own.

Both indigenous people and members of the Consejos and Gobiernos Regionales also see improved access to credit as an important weapon in the fight against poverty, and it is certainly true that at present indigenous people find it very hard to obtain credit because they have no collateral in the form of saleable land. In view of this some local leaders have recommended the setting up of a Indigenous Credit Fund (ICF) run, perhaps, by one of the region's NGOs in order to supply small unsecured loans to indigenous families.¹¹² Applications for credit, they argue, could be assessed in ICF municipality offices, while policies, procedures and periodic independent inspections would be organized from central offices in Bluefields (RAAS) and Puerto Cabezas (RAAN).

Applications for ICF loans would be made to the district offices by families, each a member of a Family Group of Four (FGF), and each application would be evaluated in terms of the credit history of the FGF as a whole. Each family would thus be responsible for the future credit worthiness of its fellow group members. FGFs would be self-selecting on the basis that families would attempt to group themselves with other families on which they could rely,¹¹³ thus ensuring that social pressure at village or community level worked to see that loans were paid back within scheduled times.¹¹⁴ Loans would be small to begin with, perhaps supporting the purchase of a gill net or a few working tools. If an FGF's dealings with the ICF proved to be satisfactory over the course of time, its constituent families may then be entitled to apply for larger loans, perhaps supporting the purchase of a canoe (dory) or in-board motor.

It is important that applications for ICF loans be for projects devised by the applicants themselves. Many indigenous people link past failures to pay unsecured loans back to creditor NGOs to the fact that these are all too often given against expensive goods offered on one-time take-it-or-leave-it bases. Typically these loans are issued with inflexible repayment schemes which take no account of the seasonal nature of indigenous work patterns. ICF loans, however, would be granted or denied according to ICF district manager evaluations of proposals or packages devised and put forward by family or FGF representatives.

Both the IDB and the present Nicaraguan administration have expressed an interest in setting up rural banking institutions, and we already know that the Consejo de Ancianos would definitely support such an initiative.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the Nicaraguan government is presently committed to withdrawing legal restrictions on small loans. Setting up an ICF, perhaps with the assistance of IDB projects such as the Microenterprise Policies Strengthening Support Program, the Multilateral Investment Fund - Facility III, and the Small Rural Enterprise Bank Program - and with the advice of locally based economists, anthropologists and sociologists (such as those working with CIDCA) - may well help to alleviate poverty among indigenous farmers and fishermen by offering them the means to participate more fully in the national economy without demanding the privatization of communal lands to be subsequently held as security against loans.

¹¹² This form of credit has been analysed and described elsewhere as Micro-Credit. The SWARAH Commisision, set up by the Consejo de Ancianos to review the present situation between the indigenous peoples represented by the Consejo and the government, in January 1997 made a number of requests to the Nicaraguan government of which one is particularly interesting. This is the demand for the creation of indigenous bank.

¹¹³ Evidence from studies of social processes among indigenous people in the region suggests that these groups would typically be composed of families whose women were consanguineal kin (Helms 1971).

¹¹⁴ Once the ICF was established interest rates might be set.

¹¹⁵ "The creation of rural banking institutions is being considered to finance small and medium size rural producers" (IDB 1998b: 3). "We are changing legislation and regulations to lure commercial banks to enter the rural market and to let non-governmental organizations already providing credit in rural areas become fully-regulated banks" (RoN1998a: 16).

In terms of the educational needs of the region's indigenous children, it is clear that funding for the Miskitu, English and Mayangna bilingual education programs should receive priority, since at present there are no funds for the reprinting of text books. Otherwise money might also be invested in the region's schools themselves, since many of them are in a poor state have insufficient classrooms. Projects of this kind could be initiated, perhaps, with the assistance of IDB programs such as the Emergency Social Fund II and III or the 1999 Education Program. Advice and participation for these should be sought from MED workers (especially those functioning at the municipal level), village school directors, the Consejos Regionales, and CIDCA who were instrumental in the production of the present set of bilingual text books.

Projects designed to reduce the types of morbidity alluded to above (in particular malaria, dengue and pneumonia), infant mortality, perhaps organized with the assistance of IDB projects such as the Emergency Social Fund II, the Health Sector Support and Strengthening Program, and the Water and Sanitation Program, might also be initiated. Advice and participation in all of these would best be sought at all level, from the local MINSA and SILAIS offices, the Consejos Regionales, BICU, URACCAN (who have held large seminars on health issues) health center and puesto personnel, brigadistas, right down to village midwives.

The inadequacy of the region's housing stock has been accentuated by the year's bush fires in the RAAS and Hurricane Mitch (Appendix C), which destroyed not only houses but many of the timber materials used to built houses. Projects designed to alleviate the housing shortage might be initiated, perhaps, with the assistance of IDB programs such as the Public Housing Program. Advice and participation for these should be sought from village síndicos, the Consejos Regionales, and CEPAD, IDSIM and the housing NGO Habitat, all of whom in the past have built low-cost housing built to designs favored by indigenous people in rural communities.

In the past economic activity on the Atlantic Coast involved the extraction of natural resources by foreign companies who had little interest in the development of the region. The return of foreign companies concerned with the short term extraction of local resources is similarly likely to do little in the long term to help the region's indigenous peoples. If development among the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast is to be sustainable, it must be generated to a considerable extent by local people committed to both regional stability and steady growth. Stability will be achieved when the lands belonging to indigenous people are secured. Growth will be spurred by the long-term availability of credit facilities, which in turn will stimulate a culture of investment in the region.¹¹⁶ Stability and growth, we hope, will reduce poor education and healthcare, housing shortages, unemployment and crime.

¹¹⁶ One local company already committed to this strategy is the Corn Island-based Morgan Group who are involved in the purchase and sale of marine resources caught by the region's artesanal fishermen.

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**Table 1. Populations of the RAAN and RAAS by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

	Total	Male	Women	Urban total	Rural total	Percentage
RAAN	192716	96220	96496	51224	14492	41.4
Waspam	35082	17072	18010	5301	29781	7.5
Puerto Cabezas	39771	19287	20484	22588	17183	8.6
Rosita	14599	7386	7213	5930	8669	3.1
Bonanza	11810	6022	5788	4459	7351	2.5
Waslala	32924	16602	16322	4082	28842	7.1
Siuna	532180	27197	26021	8530	44688	11.4
Prinzapolka	5312	2654	2658	334	4978	1.1
RAAS	272252	136998	135254	103394	168858	58.6
Bocano de Paiwas	32911	16803	16108	3346	29565	7.1
La Cruz del Río Grande	13642	7148	6494	1001	12641	2.9
Laguna de Perlas	6253	3117	3136	3325	2928	1.3
El Rama	54337	27331	27006	17183	37199	11.7
Muelle de los Bueyes	23252	11618	11634	2599	20653	5
Kukra Hill	7455	3880	3575	2839	4616	1.6
Corn Island	5336	2574	2762	5336	0	1.1
Bluefields	37254	17927	19327	33740	3514	8
Nueva Guinea	79259	40216	39043	31359	47900	17
El Tortuguero	9402	4835	4567	834	8568	2
Desembocadura del Río Grande	3151	1549	1602	1877	1274	0.7
Total RAAN and RAAS	464968	233218	231750	154719	310350	100
República de Nicaragua	4357099	2147106	2209993	2370806	1986293	
Percentage RAAN and RAAS	10.7	10.9	10.5	6.5	15.6	

Table 2. Populations of the Atlantic Coast's Groups based on INEC's (1995) Total Populations of the two Regions and the Application to these of Gonzalez's (1998) Estimates for Ethnic Group Percentages

	RAAN	RAAS	Total
Miskitu	86722	31581	118303
Creole	3854	81675	85529
Mayangna	3854	2995	6849
Garífuna	0	1906	1906
Rama	0	1906	1906
Sub-total	94430	119063	213493
Mestizos	96358	146706	243064
Others/unknown	1928	6483	8411
Total	192716	272252	464958

Table 3. Estimate for Indigenous Populations in the Eastern RAAS by Municipality (SILAIS 1997)

Ethnic group	Population	Percentage
Mestizo	38315	50
Creoles	20690	27
Miskitu	15326	20
Garífuna	1533	2
Sumu	766	1
Total	76630	100

Table 4. Mother-tongue Survey in the RAAN and the RAAS by Municipality (INEC 1997)					
Region/Municipio					
	Spanish	Miskitu	Mayangna	English	Others
RAAN	94820	52380	4297	1763	69
Waspam	3855	23114	473	20	7
Puerto Cabezas	7853	22981	79	1639	21
Rosita	9723	1287	561	43	11
Bonanza	5541	982	2985	16	0
Waslala	25758	14	0	5	16
Siuna	41777	182	175	29	12
Prinzapolka	313	3870	24	11	2
RAAS	195258	4577	252	17314	147
Bocano de Paiwas	25738	6	0	0	2
La Cruz del Río Grande	9807	98	16	690	1
Laguna de Perlas	922	402	5	3629	9
El Rama	43044	18	31	52	16
Muelle de los Bueyes	18653	2	4	2	8
Kukra Hill	5140	143	4	611	5
Corn Island	494	783	4	3083	16
Bluefields	20913	782	35	9001	66
Nueva Guinea	63432	17	14	19	23
El Tortuguero	6618	574	26	55	0
Desembocadura del Río Grande	497	1752	113	172	1
Total RAAN and RAAS	290078	56957	4549	19077	216
República de Nicaragua	3557482	60784	6226	20932	1884
Percentage RAAN and RAAS	8.2	93.7	73.1	91.1	11.5

Table 5. Composition of the RAAN Districts with Indigenous Populations (Buvollen and Almquist Buvollen 1994)¹¹⁷					
Sector	Miskitu	Mestizo	Creole	Sumu	Total
Puerto Cabezas	12821	2940	1380	46	17187
Puerto C. Llano	5248	0	0	0	5248
Llano Sur	5459	0	0	0	5459
Litoral Sur	3943	0	0	0	3943
Litoral Norte	6095	0	0	0	6095
Llano Norte	6919	883	33	505	7540
Waspam urbano	3298	460	76	14	3848
Río Coco Abajo	15381	0	0	0	15381
Río Coco Arriba	20271	314	0	326	20911
Tasba Pri	473	2089	0	0	15381
Rosita urbano	782	4246	69	137	5234
Rosita rural	0	3554	0	1406	4960
Bonanza urbano	1427	3824	66	118	5435
Bonanza rural	0	1300	0	2118	3418
Siuna urbano	247	7711	24	0	7982
Siuna rural	0	27469	0	342	27811
Prizapolka	2687	1111	0	41	3839
Total	84935	55101	1648	5053	146853
	57,9%	37,5%	1,1%	3,5%	100%

¹¹⁷ This survey should not be taken as a census for the RAAN as a whole since the Mestizo-dominated districts are not considered.

**Table 6a. Educational Level of Attainment of Population Aged 5 or More by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

Region/Municipio	Total	Unschoolled	Alfabetizado	Preschool	Primary 1-3 g.	Primary 4-6 g.
RAAN	146144	61322	4374	2790	37615	22396
Waspam	26030	7563	355	973	7898	6502
Puerto Cabezas	31114	6067	487	701	9548	6175
Rosita	11083	4248	462	244	2877	2011
Bonanza	9088	2505	311	97	2369	2413
Waslala	24573	15926	786	124	5311	1822
Siuna	40262	23416	1878	485	8322	3839
Prinzapolka	3994	1597	95	166	1290	634
RAAS	207973	97755	6041	4040	49972	30921
Bocano de Paiwas	24563	16088	953	213	5202	1739
La Cruz del Río Grande	10104	5744	408	169	2219	1164
Laguna de Perlas	5744	745	26	138	1364	1448
El Rama	41293	22711	1328	819	9376	4715
Muelle de los Bueyes	17833	8956	707	354	4451	2370
Kukra Hill	5630	2540	149	103	1580	822
Corn Island	4202	328	22	55	1029	1374
Bluefields	29575	4835	509	868	6838	7663
Nueva Guinea	60697	30332	1686	1137	15872	8437
El Tortuguero	6902	4993	252	104	1170	339
Desembocadura del Río Grande	2418	483	1	80	871	790
Total RAAN and RAAS	354117	159077	10415	6830	87587	54317
República de Nicaragua	3514630	895800	73329	77837	883483	793813
RAAN and RAAS percentage	10.1	17.8	14.2	8.8	9.9	6.8

**Table 6b. Educational Level of Attainment of Population Aged 5 or More by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

	Secondary 1-3 g.	Secondary 4-6 g.	Técnica Básica	Técnica Media	University 1-3	Universit y 4+
RAAN	10671	3733	517	712	499	515
Waspam	1892	684	44	45	43	31
Puerto Cabezas	4914	1795	318	404	347	358
Rosita	822	258	41	90	11	19
Bonanza	955	371	10	23	11	23
Waslala	473	91	7	3	6	24
Siuna	1456	498	87	146	78	57
Prinzapolka	159	36	10	1	3	3
RAAS	11848	4673	422	1159	603	539
Bocano de Paiwas	263	73	7	4	6	15
La Cruz del Río Grande	325	57	1	6	1	10
Laguna de Perlas	705	243	8	10	24	25
El Rama	1455	490	120	107	104	68
Muelle de los Bueyes	628	255	16	25	25	46
Kukra Hill	264	67	16	11	13	5
Corn Island	918	386	29	30	13	18
Bluefields	5000	2212	160	912	341	257
Nueva Guinea	2112	844	61	49	72	95
El Tortuguero	37	3	0	4	0	0
Desembocadura del Río Grande	141	43	4	1	4	0
Total RAAN and RAAS	22519	8406	939	1871	1102	1054
República de Nicaragua	413497	185981	25647	38734	58016	68493
Percentage RAAN and RAAS	5.4	4.5	3.7	4.8	1.9	1.5

Table 7. Number of Primary School Students per Grade by Sex and Region (INEC 1997)				
	RAAN		RAAS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
First grade	3483	3316	2364	2158
Second grade	2531	2480	1633	1702
Third grade	1292	1242	1037	1086
Fourth grade	1276	1360	784	842
Fifth grade	701	659	582	706
Sixth grade	670	683	491	556
Total	9953	9740	6891	7050

Table 8. Schools in the RAAN by Municipality and Educational Level (Rivera, Williamson and Rizo 1996)					
Municipalities	Pre-school	Primary	Secondary	Others	Total
Waspam	8	74	2	1	85
Puerto Cabezas	23	67	8	4	102
Prinzapolka	0	1	0	0	1
Rosita	6	46	2	1	55
Bonanza	2	18	1	3	24
Siuna	12	52	1	2	67
Total	51	258	14	11	334

Table 9. Numbers of Secondary Level Schools, Teachers and Pupils in Nicaragua (INEC 1991)			
Regions	Schools	Teachers	Pupils
Nicaragua	407	4191	180112
1. Las Segovias	24	282	16085
II. Occidental	70	748	29164
III. Managua	108	1390	68172
IV. Sur	90	902	34717
V. Central	38	245	10722
VI. Norte	47	388	14161
VII. RAAN	15	50	3911
VIII. RAAS	9	68	2197
IX. Río San Juan	6	18	983

Table 10. Mortality Figures for the Eastern RAAS (1992-96) by Age Group (SILAIS 1998)						
Age groups	1992 no.	1992 tasa	1993 no.	1993 tasa	1994 no.	1994 tasa
0-6 days	17	-	25	8.54	18	5.91
7-27 days	10	-	10	3.41	-	
28 days - 11 months	34	-	50	17.9	23	7.55
Less than one year	61	-	85	29	41	13.46
1-4 years	16	-	20	2.77	21	2.79
5-14 years	7	-	7	0.97	6	0.79
15-34 years	35	-	20	2.77	33	4.39
35-49 years	19	-	15	2.08	20	2.66
50+ years	96	-	124	17.2	115	15.33
All age groups	234	-	271	37.5	281	37
	1994-1995 no.	1994-1995 tasa	1995-1996 no.	1995-1996 tasa		
0-6 days	24	7.8	13	4.19		
7-27 days	5	1.64	15	4.82		
28 days - 11 months	51	15.74	35	11.25		
Less than one year	80	26.27	63	20.25		
1-4 years	33	4.39	29	3.7		
5-14 years	15	1.99	10	1.3		
15-34 years	30	3.99	27	3.52		
35-49 years	40	5.33	37	4.8		
50+ years	117	15.6	90	11.7		
All age groups	315	41	256	33.4		

**Table 11a. Reported Cases of Morbidity in the Eastern RAAS (1992-94),
by Mode of Transmission
(SILAIS 1998)**

Via de	Enfermedad	1992 no.	1993 tasa	1993 no.	1993. tasa	1994 no.	1994 tasa
Transmisión Aérea	Nuemonia						
	Otras IRA	24141		33238		32408	
	Tuberculosis	133	190	73	101	93	129
	Sarampión	28	4	2	0.27		
	Varicela	66	9.5	81	11.2	113	15
	Parotiditis	2	0.28	211	29	152	20
	Rubéola	38	5.4	12	1.6	71	9.4
	Tos Ferina	126	18	1	0.13		
	Difteria						
	Meningitis	8	1.2	16	2.2	15	2
	- Bacteriana	8	1.2	13	1.8	13	1.8
	- Viral			3	0.4	2	0.26
	Tuberculosa						
	EDA	4977	719	8446	8.6	8335	
	Amebiasis	34	4.9	106	15	87	11.6
Hídrica	Tifoidea						
	Parasitosis	8009	158	15767	15	1264	12.5
	Hepat. Viral	45	650	107		94	57.6
	Cólera			65		432	
	Malaria	8346		5703		6636	
Vectorial	Dengue					417	55.6
	Leishmanias	97		84	12	60	8
	Leptospiros						
Contacto	Gonorrea	235	33	396	55	513	68.4
	Sifilis	12		20	2.77	35	4.6
	SIDA					2	0.26
	Otras ETS	2	0.07			67	8.9
	T t. Neonat.						
	Otros T tan						
	Escabiasis						

Table 11b. Reported Cases of Morbidity in the Eastern RAAS (1995-96), by Mode of Transmission (SILAIS 1998)					
Via de	Efermedad	1995 no.	1995 tasa	1995-6 no.	1995-6 tasa
Transmisión Aérea	Neumonia	778	103		
	Otras IRA	31640			
	Tuberculosis	90	120	99	
	Sarampión				
	Varicela	105	14	163	21.2
	Parotiditis	16	2.1	27	3.5
	Rubéola	9	1.2	9	1.17
	Tos Ferina				
	Difteria				
	Meningitis	15	2	16	2.08
	- Bacteriana	14	1.86	16	2.08
	- Viral	1	0.13		
	Tuberculosa				
	EDA	6034		6011	784
Hídrica	Amebiasis	189	25	174	22.7
	Tifoidea				
	Parasitosis	7849	25	6056	790
	Hepat. Viral	78	10.4	84	11
	Cólera	550	73	141	18
Vectorial	Malaria	8225		10357	
	Dengue	95	12.6	3	0.39
	Leishmanias	69	9.2	168	21.9
	Leptospiros				
Contacto	Gonorrrea	501	66.8	480	62
	Sifilis	157		177	23
	SIDA	3	0.4	1	0.13
	Otras ETS	108	14.4		
	T_t. Neonat.				
	Otros T_tan				
	Escabiasis	654	87.2	741	96

Table 12. Reported Cases of Malaria in the Eastern RAAS by Municipality (SILAIS 1998)					
Municipality	Reported Cases	Positive	Vivax	Falciparum	Percentage of positive cases
Corn Island	412	140	103	37	35
La Cruz de Río Grande	397	60	47	13	15.11
Bluefields	4624	435	372	63	9.41
Laguna de Perlas	840	268	206	62	32
Kukra Hill	227	71	51	20	31.41
Tortuguero	1158	124	87	37	11
Desembocadura del Río Grande	349	48	46	2	14
Total	8007	1146	912	234	14.33

Table 13. Figures for Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality and Related Problems in the Eastern RAAS (SILAIS 1998)				
	No. in 1997	No. in 1998	Tasa 1997	Tasa 1998
Malnutrition of children less than 1	276	217	5.6	4.54
Underweight children at birth	132	122	6.2	6
Malnutrition of children 1-4	451	481	9.5	9.2
Rate of general mortality	228	272	29.75	29.41
Rate of perinatal mortality	38	45	17.7	21.7
Rate of infantile mortality	59	61	27.74	29.84
Rate of maternal mortality	11	10	?	?
Foetal deaths	18	25	8.39	12

**Table 14. Number of Dwellings and Occupants by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

Region	Total		Urban		Rural	
Municipalities	Dwellings	Occupants	Dwellings	Occupants	Dwellings	Occupants
RAAN	35,154	192,716	9,563	51,224	25,591	141,492
Waspán	6,107	35,082	817	5,301	5,290	29,781
Puerto Cabezas	7,124	39,771	3,977	22,588	3,147	17,183
Rosita	2,725	14,599	1,166	5,930	1,559	8,669
Bonanza	2,128	11,810	884	4,459	1,244	7,351
Waslala	5,832	32,924	839	4,082	4,993	28,842
Siuna	10,256	53,218	1,820	8,530	8,436	44,688
Prinzapolka	982	5,312	60	334	922	4,978
RAAS	47,470	272,252	19,794	103,394	27,676	168,858
Bocana de Paiwas	5,324	32,911	600	3,346	4,724	29,565
La Cruz del Río Grande	2,137	13,642	160	1,001	1,977	12,641
Laguna de Perlas	1,135	6,253	556	3,325	579	2,928
El Rama	9,658	54,337	3,531	17,138	6,127	37,199
Muelle de los Bueyes	4,194	23,252	567	2,599	3,627	20,653
Kukra Hill	1,619	7,455	640	2,839	979	4,616
Corn Island	1,244	5,336	1,244	5,336	0	0
Bluefields	7,598	37,254	6,819	33,740	779	3,514
Nueva Guinea	12,714	79,259	5,267	31,359	7,447	47,900
El Tortuguero	1,366	9,402	134	834	1,232	8,568
Desembocadura del Río Grande	481	3,151	276	1,877	205	1,274
Total RAAN and RAAS	82,624	464,968	29,357	154,618	53,267	310,350
República de Nicaragua	820,774	4,357,099	465,077	2,370,806	355,697	1,986,293
RAAN and RAAS percentage	10.1	10.7	6.3	6.5	15.0	15.6

**Table 15a. Number of Bedrooms per Dwelling and Occupant
(INEC 1997)**

Region /	Total			1 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms		
Municipality	Dwelling	Occupants	Bedrooms	Dwellings	Occupant	Bedroom	Dwelling	Occupant	Bedroom
RAAN	31,126	192,420	47,969	19,151	109,737	19,151	8,490	56,163	16,980
Waspán	5,600	35,075	8,291	3,664	21,756	3,664	1,399	9,182	2,798
Puerto Cabezas	6,161	39,732	11,715	2,717	15,953	2,717	2,009	13,000	4,018
Rosita	2,437	14,543	3,721	1,480	8,038	1,480	703	4,610	1,406
Bonanza	1,898	11,804	3,114	1,012	5,727	1,012	653	4,378	1,306
Waslala	5,264	32,837	7,298	3,664	21,115	3,664	1,265	8,976	2,530
Siuna	8,974	53,117	12,633	6,122	34,047	6,122	2,252	14,520	4,504
Prinzapolka	792	5,312	1,197	492	3,101	492	209	1,497	418
RAAS	42,983	271,875	70,455	23,497	136,521	23,497	13,902	92,723	27,804
Bocana de Paiwas	4,971	32,902	7,613	2,962	17,742	2,962	1,550	11,192	3,100
La Cruz del Río Grande	2,010	13,633	2,861	1,306	8,138	1,306	605	4,738	1,210
Laguna de Perlas	994	6,247	2,190	315	1,560	315	324	1,914	648
El Rama	8,607	54,242	13,776	4,716	26,932	4,716	2,970	19,876	5,940
Muelle de los Bueyes	3,749	23,235	6,162	2,060	11,398	2,060	1,173	7,943	2,346
Kukra Hill	1,355	7,443	2,170	814	4,040	814	396	2,419	792
Corn Island	1,074	5,306	2,086	425	1,750	425	375	1,893	750
Bluefields	6,743	37,116	13,052	2,690	12,642	2,690	2,508	13,746	5,016
Nueva Guinea	11,718	79,198	17,778	7,081	44,586	7,081	3,577	25,883	7,154
El Tortuguero	1,322	9,402	1,939	951	6,588	951	252	1,864	504
Desembocadura del Río Grande	440	3,151	828	177	1,145	177	172	1,255	344
Total RAAN and RAAS	74,109	464,295	118,424	42,648	246,258	42,648	22,392	148,886	44,784
República de Nicaragua	751,637	4,345,954	1,701,561	227,666	1,176,632	227,666	272,916	1,562,115	545,832
RAAN y RAAS percentage	9.9	10.7	7.0	18.7	20.9	18.7	8.2	9.5	8.2

**Table 15b. Number of Bedrooms per Dwelling and Occupant
(INEC 1997)**

Region/	Total			3 B'rooms	3 B'rooms	3 B'rooms	4+ Bedrooms	4 B'rooms	
Municipality	Dwelling	Occupants	B'rooms	Dwellings	Occupant	B'rooms	Dwelling	Occupant	B'rooms
RAAN	3,485	26,520	11,838	2,586	19,166	7,758	899	7,354	4,080
Waspán	537	4,137	1,829	384	2,894	1,152	153	1,243	677
Puerto Cabezas	1,435	10,779	4,980	1,015	7,322	3,045	420	3,457	1,935
Rosita	254	1,895	835	201	1,456	603	53	439	232
Bonanza	233	1,699	796	165	1,130	495	68	569	301
Waslala	335	2,746	1,104	270	2,237	810	65	509	294
Siuna	600	4,550	2,007	472	3,520	1,416	128	1,030	591
Prinzapolka	91	714	287	79	607	237	12	107	50
RAAS	5,584	42,631	19,154	4,060	29,988	12,180	1,524	12,643	6,974
Bocana de Paiwas	459	3,968	1,551	348	2,966	1,044	111	1,002	507
La Cruz del Río Grande	99	757	345	74	528	222	25	229	123
Laguna de Perlas	355	2,773	1,227	245	1,787	735	110	986	492
El Rama	921	7,434	3,120	675	5,363	2,025	246	2,071	1,095
Muelle de los Bueyes	516	3,894	1,756	380	2,818	1,140	136	1,076	616
Kukra Hill	145	984	564	104	685	312	41	299	252
Corn Island	274	1,663	911	207	1,210	621	67	453	290
Bluefields	1,545	10,728	5,346	1,066	6,873	3,198	479	3,855	2,148
Nueva Guinea	1,060	8,729	3,543	804	6,477	2,412	256	2,252	1,131
El Tortuguero	119	950	484	88	709	264	31	241	220
Desembocadura del Río Grande	91	751	307	69	572	207	22	179	100
Total RAAN and RAAS	9,069	69,151	30,992	6,646	49,154	19,938	2,423	19,997	11,054
República de Nicaragua	251,055	1,607,207	928,063	147,496	923,801	442,488	103,559	683,406	485,575
Peso porcentual RAAN y RAAS	3.6	4.3	3.3	4.5	5.3	4.5	2.3	2.9	2.3

Table 16. Mode of Illumination by Municipality (INEC 1997)					
Region			Electric	Gas	
Municipality	Dwellings	Occupants	Light	(Kerosene)	Other
RAAN	31,126	192,420	5,873	20,277	4,976
Waspán	5,600	35,075	276	3,094	2,230
Puerto Cabezas	6,161	39,732	2,669	2,389	1,103
Rosita	2,437	14,543	645	1,267	525
Bonanza	1,898	11,804	956	488	454
Waslala	5,264	32,837	438	4,718	108
Siuna	8,974	53,117	882	7,819	273
Prinzapolka	792	5,312	7	502	283
RAAS	42,983	271,875	13,473	27,703	1,807
Bocana de Paiwas	4,971	32,902	268	4,607	96
La Cruz del Río Grande	2,010	13,633	47	1,484	479
Laguna de Perlas	994	6,247	501	455	38
El Rama	8,607	54,242	1,816	6,461	330
Muelle de los Bueyes	3,749	23,235	1,156	2,526	67
Kukra Hill	1,355	7,443	72	1,158	125
Corn Island	1,074	5,306	825	177	72
Bluefields	6,743	37,116	5,399	909	435
Nueva Guinea	11,718	79,198	3,260	8,352	106
El Tortuguero	1,322	9,402	110	1,184	28
Desembocadura del Río Grande	440	3,151	19	390	31
Total RAAN and RAAS	74,109	464,295	19,346	47,980	6,783
República de Nicaragua	751,637	4,345,954	463,554	253,260	34,823
RAAN y RAAS percentage	9.9	10.7	4.2	18.9	19.5

Table 17. Sanitary Arrangements by Municipality (INEC 1997)								
	Total		Toilet	Connected	Connected	Dischare		
Region Municipality	Dwellings	Occupants	Total	to sewage System	To septic tank	into river or pit	Latrine	None
RAAN	31,126	192,420	1,188	369	269	550	13,353	16,585
Waspán	5,600	35,075	159	12	19	128	2,175	3,266
Puerto Cabezas	6,161	39,732	397	163	127	107	3,634	2,130
Rosita	2,437	14,543	15	2	11	2	1,467	955
Bonanza	1,898	11,804	283	55	34	194	1,023	592
Waslala	5,264	32,837	66	35	24	7	2,024	3,174
Siuna	8,974	53,117	232	94	52	86	2,765	5,977
Prinzapolka	792	5,312	36	8	2	26	265	491
RAAS	42,983	271,875	2,234	648	1,352	234	23,418	17,331
Bocana de Paiwas	4,971	32,902	43	10	23	10	1,484	3,444
La Cruz del Río Grande	2,010	13,633	27	13	5	9	690	1,293
Laguna de Perlas	994	6,247	25	4	20	1	629	340
El Rama	8,607	54,242	220	53	111	56	4,416	3,971
Muelle de los Bueyes	3,749	23,235	92	41	47	4	1,830	1,827
Kukra Hill	1,355	7,443	45	42	3	0	855	455
Corn Island	1,074	5,306	135	30	105	0	822	117
Bluefields	6,743	37,116	1,380	298	950	132	4,788	575
Nueva Guinea	11,718	79,198	153	90	54	9	6,834	4,731
El Tortuguero	1,322	9,402	99	66	21	12	786	437
Desembocadura del Río Grande	440	3,151	15	1	13	1	284	141
Total RAAN and RAAS	74,109	464,295	3,422	1,017	1,621	784	36,771	33,916
República de Nicaragua	751,637	4,345,954	158,830	129,607	26,510	2,713	424,673	168,134
RAAN and RAAS percentage	9.9	10.7	2.2	0.8	6.1	28.9	8.7	20.2

**Table 18. Employment Statistics for those Over 10 years Old by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

		Población Económicamente Activa (PEA)				
Region Municipality	Total	Total PEA	Ocupados	Desocupados Cesantes	1ra vez	Otro
RAAN	120,691	55,478	44,409	6,294	884	3,891
Waspán	21,035	9,189	6,428	740	116	1,905
Puerto Cabezas	26,225	11,028	7,226	2,659	241	902
Rosita	9,185	3,969	3,361	525	42	41
Bonanza	7,494	3,425	3,082	230	35	78
Waslala	20,254	9,875	9,023	568	138	146
Siuna	33,278	16,715	14,402	1,323	263	727
Prinzapolka	3,220	1,277	887	249	49	92
RAAS	172,672	84,336	74,395	7,612	1,136	1,193
Bocana de Paiwas	20,095	11,002	10,088	506	292	116
La Cruz del Río Grande	8,331	4,716	4,513	152	14	37
Laguna de Perlas	3,957	1,689	1,318	192	110	69
El Rama	34,165	16,516	14,464	1,703	99	250
Muelle de los Bueyes	14,864	7,211	6,442	642	79	48
Kukra Hill	4,683	2,359	2,123	212	14	10
Corn Island	3,665	1,709	1,399	267	36	7
Bluefields	25,469	11,560	8,980	2,177	250	153
Nueva Guinea	49,863	24,046	21,898	1,639	202	307
El Tortuguero	5,576	2,838	2,586	51	11	190
Desembocadura del Río Grande	2,004	690	584	71	29	6
Total RAAN and RAAS	293,363	139,814	118,804	13,906	2,020	5,084
República de Nicaragua	3,012,348	1,447,847	1,203,064	182,748	20,279	41756
RAAN and RAAS percentage	9.7	9.7	9.9	7.6	10.0	12.2

**Table 19. Unemployment Statistics for those Over 10 Years Old by Municipality
(INEC 1997)**

Region Municipality	Población Económicamente Inactiva (PEI)				Incapacitado	
	Total PEI	Pensionado / jubilado	Ama de Casa	Estudiante	Permanent	Otro
RAAN	65,213	699	32,412	23,909	1,071	7,122
Waspán	11,846	81	5,120	6,040	236	369
Puerto Cabezas	15,197	240	5,643	8,129	319	866
Rosita	5,216	66	2,830	1,818	104	398
Bonanza	4,069	92	1,981	1,732	48	216
Waslala	10,379	22	6,475	1,902	128	1,852
Siuna	16,563	171	9,434	3,520	163	3,275
Prinzapolka	1,943	27	929	768	73	146
RAAS	88,336	590	46,889	28,106	1,828	10,923
Bocana de Paiwas	9,093	45	5,642	1,886	190	1,330
La Cruz del Río Grande	3,615	34	2,100	810	72	599
Laguna de Perlas	2,268	26	977	1,045	109	111
El Rama	17,649	96	9,611	4,583	367	2,992
Muelle de los Bueyes	7,653	30	4,402	1,959	172	1,090
Kukra Hill	2,324	7	1,233	721	53	310
Corn Island	1,956	27	912	918	44	55
Bluefields	13,909	210	5,356	6,970	329	1,044
Nueva Guinea	25,817	101	14,111	8,010	439	3,156
El Tortuguero	2,738	4	1,924	582	15	213
Desembocadura del Río Grande	1,314	10	621	622	38	23
Total RAAN and RAAS	153,549	1,289	79,301	52,015	2,899	18,045
República de Nicaragua	1,564,501	24,830	671,261	689,674	37,949	
RAAN and RAAS percentage	9.8	5.2	11.8	7.5	7.6	12.8

Appendix A

IDB Programs of Potential Interest to Indigenous People in Nicaragua

Microenterprise Policies Strengthening Support (approved 1991).
Small Rural Enterprise Bank (technical cooperation) (1998).
Resolution of Property Conflicts (technical cooperation) (approved 1995).
Conservation and Management of Forestry Resources (approved 1996).
Study on Commercial Agriculture Improvement (1998).
Electrical System Rehabilitation (approved 1991).
Water and Sewerage Rehabilitation (approved 1992).
Emergency Social Fund II and III (Education) (approved 1994 and 1997) .
Education Program (1999).
Emergency Social Fund II (Health) (approved 1994 and 1997).
Health Sector Support and Strengthening (1998).
Water and Sanitation Program (1999).
Public Housing Program (1998).
Multilateral Investment Fund - Facility III (microenterprise support services) (approved 1998).
(IDB 1998b: 16-18).

Appendix B

Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua

Artículo 5. El Estado reconoce la existencia de los pueblos indígenas, que gozan de los derechos, deberes y garantías consignados en la Constitución, y en especial los de mantener y desarrollar su identidad y cultura ... así como mantener las formas comunales de sus tierras y el goce, uso y disfrute de las mismas, todo de conformidad con la ley ...

Artículo 89. El Estado reconoce las formas comunales de propiedad de las tierras de las comunidades de la Costa Atlántica igualmente reconoce el goce, uso y disfrute de las aguas y bosques de sus tierras comunales ...

Artículo 91. El Estado tiene la obligación de dictar leyes destinadas a promover acciones que aseguren que ningún nicaraguense sea objeto de discriminación por razón de lengua, cultura y origen.

Artículo 180. ... El Estado garantiza a estas comunidades el disfrute de sus recursos naturales, la efectividad de sus formas de propiedad comunal ...

Estatuto de Autonomía¹¹⁸

Artículo 11. Los habitantes de las comunidades de la Costa Atlántica tienen derecho a:

3. Usar, gozar y disfrutar de las aguas, bosque y tierras comunales dentro de los planes de desarrollo nacional.
4. Desarrollar libremente sus organizaciones sociales y productivas conforme a sus propios valores.
6. Formas comunales, colectivas o individuales de propiedad y la transmisión de la misma.

Artículo 36. La propiedad comunal la constituyen las tierras, aguas y bosques que han pertenecido tradicionalmente a las comunidades de la Costa Atlántica.

¹¹⁸ Published in *La Gaceta*, Diario Oficial No.238, October 30, 1987.

Appendix C

Hurricane Mitch

Much of Central America was devastated at the beginning of November by Hurricane Mitch. Although discussion of this disaster lies beyond the scope of this paper, we would like to present a brief summary of the ways it has affected the lives of Nicaragua's indigenous people in the Atlantic Coast areas.

Much of the damage in the area was caused not by the winds but by floods, as the Coco, Grande, Prinzapolka, Licos and Wawa Rivers broke their banks. Altogether in the RAAN 86 communities were afflicted with 41,772 people affected, 9 killed, nine disappeared and 4,184 houses destroyed. 6,517 manzanas of rice, corn, beans, cassava, plantains, quequisque, bananas and other root crops are estimated to have been destroyed in the RAAN. In the RAAS 21 communities were afflicted, principally along the Río Grande. 7,985 people were affected, 7 killed, an unknown number disappeared, 1,337 houses destroyed, and unknown quantities of crops ruined.

The districts inhabited by indigenous people most severely affected are situated in northern parts of the Bosawas Reserve along the Río Coco, its tributaries, and the Río Bocay in the northerwestern RAAN and an adjacent corner of Jinotega. In this area rivers rose to over 50 feet in two days, 79% of the houses were destroyed, 95% of the livestock lost, 100% of the crops ruined, and 10,254 people left homeless. The most severely afflicted communities in this exceptionally isolated part of the country are, as far as we are aware, Raiti (1,311 persons affected), Puramar_a (132), Siksayari (880), Andristara (917), El Naranjal (125), Kiplamahta (120), Santa Isabel (1,200), Sausa (350), San Alberto (730), Kisubila (252), El Carmen (300), Bullsirpi (276), Santa Ana (426), Aniws (543), Kayotingni (unknown) and Pispila (unknown). Twenty-two other communities in this district have been severely afflicted. The inhabitants of these communities continue to need help in the form of rice, beans, plastic sheeting, medicine and clothing. In the longer term these people will need a great deal of help rebuilding their lives. The danger is that because these communities are so remote they will be forgotten.

Appendix D

Regional Experts Consulted

Carlos Silva Fagoth - Consejo Regional - RAAN (Presidente) - Puerto Cabezas.
Victor Pomares - Consejo Regional - RAAN (Asesor Técnico) - Puerto Cabezas.
Luis Clercx - Gobierno Regional - RAAS (Asesor Planificación) – Bluefields.
Henry Francis - Gobierno Regional - RAAS (YATAMA member) – Tasbapauni.
Henningston Hodgson Mairena - RAAN-ASDI-RAAN (Coordinador) – Managua.
Henry R. Myers - DANIDA (Coordinador Equipo Socioeconómico) – Bluefields.
Albert St. Clair - URACCAN (Vice Rector) - Puerto Cabezas and Siuna.
Ignacio Lavonte Vallecillo - MED – Bluefields.
Dr V. Rocha - MINSA – Bluefields.
Dr. Marc Isler - SILAIS – Bluefields.
Manuel López - IDSIM – Bluefields.
Gilberto Molina - IDSIM - Puerto Cabezas.
Rodolfo Rivera - Consejo de Ancianos (Presidente) - Puerto Cabezas.
Otis Lam - Consejo de Ancianos (Treasurer) - Puerto Cabezas.
Gamiliás Enríquez - Consejo de Ancianos (Vice-President) - Puerto Cabezas.
Reynaldo Reyes Davis - former head of intelligence, KISAN - Awastara.
Rev. Elvis Dublón - indigenous rights lawyer - Puerto Cabezas.
Roberto Wilson - Ten Communities (indigenous organization) - Puerto Cabezas.
Elizabeth Henríquez - AMICA - Puerto Cabezas.
Fermin Chavarría - MIRAAS (Indigenous Movement of the RAAS) – Bluefields.
Cleveland Macrae - Rama community leader - Rama Cay.
Ernesto Almedarez Robinson - SUKAWALA and TRENAMAKS (Presidente) – Rosita.