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## Community Action for Reading and Security (CARS) Activity in Nicaragua

Third Report for the Program for Reading and Security  
PROGRES

2017-2018

January, 2020

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# Community Action for Reading and Security - Nicaragua

## Third PROGRES Report 2017-2018

Submitted to:

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## ACRONYMS

AECID	<i>Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo</i>
AyE	<i>Aprendo y Emprendo Project</i>
AMC	<i>Acción Médica Cristiana</i>
APA	<i>Aprendo, Practico, Aplico (I Learn, I Practice, I Apply; active teaching methodology for primary schools)</i>
BICU	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University
CAPS	<i>Centro de Atención Psicosocial</i>
CARS	Community Action for Reading and Security
CDD	<i>Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (Catholics for the Right to Choose)</i>
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy USAID-Nicaragua
CEAA	<i>Centro de Educación Ambiental y Agroforestal (Center for Environmental and Agroforestry Education)</i>
CEDEHCA	<i>Centro de Derechos Humanos Ciudadanos y Autonómicos</i>
CEIMM	<i>Centro de Estudios e Información de la Mujer Multiétnica (Center for Studies and Information on Multiethnic Women)</i>
EFS	Education for Success
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMNV	<i>Encuesta de Medición de Nivel de Vida (Living Standard Measurement Survey)</i>
EpC	<i>Espacios para Crecer (Spaces to Grow)</i>
FADCANIC	<i>Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua)</i>
FHR	<i>Fundación Hermanamiento Rama</i>
FUNIDES	<i>Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development)</i>
FUNPADEM	<i>Fundación para la Paz y la Democracia (Foundation for Peace and Democracy)</i>
FQSF	<i>Fundación Quiero Ser Feliz</i>
FZT	<i>Fundación Zamora Terán</i>
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IBE	Intercultural Bilingual Education
IBIS	Danish development organization
IDEUCA	<i>Instituto de Educación de la Universidad Centroamericana</i>
IEEPP	<i>Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas (Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies)</i>
INATEC	<i>Instituto Nacional Tecnológico (National Technological Institute)</i>
INIDE	<i>Instituto Nicaragüense de Información para el Desarrollo (National Institute of Information Development)</i>
INL	International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
MAI	Modelo de atención integral
MESA	<i>Mejor Educación y Salud</i>
MIFAN	Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Childhood
MINED	Ministry of Education
MINSA	Ministry of Health
MINJUVE	Ministry of Youth
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PCI	Project Concern International
PERNA	<i>Política y Estrategia Regional de Niñez y Adolescencia</i>
PREAL	<i>Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina</i>
PROGRES	USAID Program for Reading and Security
PN	<i>Policía Nacional</i> (National Police)
QTECC	Quality Technical Education for the Caribbean Coast
RACCN	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Norte</i> (North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RACCS	<i>Región Autónoma de la Costa Caribe Sur</i> (South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region)
RENET	<i>Red Nicaragüense para la Educación Técnica</i>
SEAR	<i>Sistema Educativo Autonomico Regional</i> (Regional Autonomous Educational System)
SISMO	<i>Sistema de Monitoreo de la Opinión Pública</i> (Public Opinion Monitoring System)
SNIP	<i>Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública</i> (National Public Investment System)
TERCE	<i>Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Evaluativo</i> (Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study)
T&P	<i>Programa Formal Transición y Primaria</i>
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URACCAN	Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WHO	World Health Organization



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Republic of Nicaragua is divided into 15 departments and two (2) autonomous regions made up of 153 municipalities. According to population projections, by 2016 the country had a total of 6.3 million inhabitants (INIDE, 2015) of which 3.1 million were men (49.3%) and 3.2 million were women (50.7%) for a gender ratio of 97.4 men for every 100 women (Estadísticas de Centroamérica 2017). According to area of residence, National Institute of Information Development (*Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo*, INIDE 2015) data indicates that by 2016 the urban population was 3,676,119 and the rural population was 2,651,808 inhabitants. Nationally, life expectancy at birth was 75.7 years for both sexes (72.5 years for men and 78.8 for women).
2. The Caribbean Coast covers about 50% of the national territory and is made up of the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN) and the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS). According to census data, these autonomous regions make up 13.8% of the total population of Nicaragua. Between 1995 and 2005, the RACCN had the highest annual population growth in the country (4.9%), while the RACCS had an annual growth rate of 1.2%. This highlights differences in demographic dynamics between the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions.
3. Nicaragua is recognized as the safest country in Central America. This is partly due to a low homicide rate and the absence of gangs. However, "security" is relative. In Nicaragua, the Demographic Crime Index (*Índice Delictivo Demográfico*, IDD) indicates that in 2017 the National Police (*Policía Nacional*, PN) received a total of 1,267 complaints per 100,000 inhabitants and 1,104 complaints in 2018. At the national level, it is more likely to be the victim of some type of injury, than of robbery with force or intimidation.
4. Crimes or misdemeanors against life, sexual freedom, bodily integrity, property crimes and femicides are the main problems facing the country. In this type of crime, the RACCN and RACCS have figures that exceed national averages. For example, while at the national level homicide rates were 8 and 7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015 and 2016, respectively, in the RACCN they were 20 and 15 for the same years and in the RACCS 33 and 28.
5. Like homicides, sex crimes and robberies of all kinds are higher in both autonomous regions than nationally – an important fact about the insecurity experienced in the Caribbean Coast and the fragility of social coexistence.
6. The most relevant indicator with regard to gender-based violence (GBV) is femicides registered in the South Caribbean. In the RACCS, the National Police does not report any femicides during 2018 and only reports one femicide in 2016. However, *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* (Catholics for the Right to Choose, CDD) identifies eight femicides in 2018 and 14 in 2016. The gap in the registration/classification of the crime is linked to the interpretation of this crime made by the public institutions of the State.
7. In national surveys, the perceptions of the population regarding citizen security in 2015 also identify theft as one of the main security problems in the Caribbean Coast (*Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas*, 2016, p. 37)<sup>1</sup>. At the neighborhood or community level, the population places shoplifting (70%), gang-related violence (45%), liquor sales (31%) and drug sales

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<sup>1</sup> The survey conducted by the Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (*Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas*, IEEPP) does not include disaggregations by autonomous region.

(27.5%) as the main security issues. In surveys specific to the Caribbean, the main problems of violence at the community level are perceived as violence against women, interfamily violence, increase in drug sales and the increase in young addicts.

8. Taking into account the achievements and challenges presented in PROGRES 1 and 2, the education situation in the North and South Caribbean has not undergone substantial changes to structural problems/challenges.
9. The Caribbean Coast faces the following challenges in the education sector: reduce illiteracy (11.4% in the Caribbean Coast, 6.26% at the national level)<sup>2</sup>, equate the average years of schooling in the region (6.7 years) with those registered at the national level (7.5 years) among the population not in poverty<sup>3</sup>, limit the impact of poverty on access to educational opportunities, expand educational coverage/access in rural areas and strengthen attendance of children and adolescents to preschool, primary and secondary education levels<sup>4</sup>. According to the Living Standard Measurement Survey 2014 (*Encuesta de Medición de Nivel de Vida*, EMNV) data, 70.1% of children 3-5 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend preschool, as compared with 57.6% nationwide; 18% of those 6-11 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend primary school, as compared to 8% nationwide; and 28% of those 12-16 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend secondary school, as compared to 20.4% nationwide.
10. Regarding literacy, the results of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) mid-term evaluation carried out by CARS indicate that:
  - a. In Spanish, students correctly read (reading fluency) on average 18, 45 and 65 words per minute for first, second and third grades, respectively. In Miskitu, students read on average, 3, 8 and 24 words per minute. The study showed that students who participate in the non-formal program, Spaces to Grow (*Espacios para Crecer*, EpC), have a 12% greater reading fluency in Spanish and 18% greater in Miskitu than those in the formal program (that is, they read 12% more correct words per minute in Spanish and 18% more in Miskitu). The results show that, overall, only 29.7% of students read fluently in Spanish according to international reading standards<sup>5</sup>, while 34% do so in Miskitu according to the standards developed by DevTech for this language. The regional analysis shows that RACCN students have greater learning difficulties than those of the RACCS. Results for reading fluency in Spanish show that 33% of RACCS students read fluently, while only 23% do so in RACCN. Similarly, 48% of RACCS students are at high risk, while in the RACCN this data rises to 64%.
  - b. In reading comprehension, Spanish-speaking students reached a level of 13%, 35% and 47% for grades 1, 2 and 3, respectively, for an overall reading comprehension average of 32%. The students evaluated in Miskitu, obtained a level of 2%, 5% and 22% for grades 1, 2 and 3, respectively, for an overall reading comprehension of 11%. Regardless of region, language and sex, these results indicate that, even in third grade, students understand less than half of

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<sup>2</sup> The data presented in this paragraph correspond to our own processes based on the Living Standard Measurement Survey 2014 (*Encuesta de Medición de Nivel de Vida*, EMNV 2014) database.

<sup>3</sup> The population in poverty on the Caribbean coast has an average of 4.3 years of schooling and those in extreme poverty, 2.7 years.

<sup>4</sup> According to EMNV 2014 data, non-attendance to preschool, primary and secondary school of children and adolescents of the corresponding ages is greater in the Caribbean coast than in other regions of the country (Pacific, Central) including the national level.

<sup>5</sup> CARS uses the *Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito de la Lectura* (Dynamic Indicators of Reading Success, IDEL) to assess early literacy skills in Spanish by establishing benchmarks on the number of words a student should read per grade (at the beginning, middle and end of grade). These benchmarks help classify reading between fluid, low risk, and high risk.

- what they read. In the case of Miskitu, the overall reading comprehension average indicates that these students only understand one tenth – part of what they read, which prevents them from retaining any type of learning.
11. The implementation of the Regional Autonomous Educational System (SEAR) did not show significant progress. The assessments of the various actors consulted and linked to the education system indicated that the IEB program is in “abandonment”, without qualified technicians and without the investment of resources for teacher training, curricular updating, the generation of materials and accompaniment to the educational centers that implement it. Therefore, during the quinquennium it has not been possible to identify actions aimed at improving the structural factors that limit SEAR implementation.
  12. In PROGRES 2013-2014, CARS and *Educación para el Éxito* (Education for Success) implemented by the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (*Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua*, FADCANIC) were registered as the main actions of USAID for the implementation of the Reading and Security Program in the South Caribbean. In 2015-2016, these projects continued their work and two more actions began that contribute to the achievement of Development Objective (DO) 2: the *Aprendo y Emprendo* (“I learn, I Launch”) Project implemented by Creative Associates International, and the Quality Technical Education for the Caribbean Coast (QTECC) implemented by FADCANIC through the Center for Environmental and Agroforestry Education (*Centro de Educación Ambiental y Agroforestal*, CEAA) located in the Wawashang Nature Reserve.
  13. Three initiatives continue to be implemented during the reported period (2017-2018): 1) CARS, 2) the *Aprendo y Emprendo* (“I learn, I Launch”) Project implemented by Creative Associates International and 3) *Educación para el Éxito* (“Education for Success”) implemented by the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (*Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua*, FADCANIC).

## I. INTRODUCTION

This third report for the USAID Program for Reading and Security (PROGRES) corresponds to the 2017-2018 period. The purpose of this document is to present main achievements in education and security in the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS) including observed results, limitations, trends and challenges to overcome in each area. In addition, the report includes a record of actions implemented with funding from USAID and other organizations.

The report is structured around three central components: education, security and interventions financed or not by USAID and implemented – or being implemented – in the North and South Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Section II of this document contains general information on the socio-demographic environment of the region. Section III presents data on citizen security and its main indicators. Section IV presents the educational situation, data collected on relevant indicators and progress on the Regional Autonomous Educational System (*Sistema Educativo Autonómico Regional, SEAR*). Section V, the final section, presents conclusions and recommendations.

The report includes primary and secondary data sources. Primary sources included three (3) semi structured interviews with key actors in two (2) municipalities of the Southern Caribbean Coast<sup>6</sup>.

In order to obtain as much data as possible on education and citizen security indicators, secondary data sources were consulted. Given limitations to access data and latent tensions resulting from the socio-political crisis that began in April 2018<sup>7</sup>, the educational data presented focuses on the analysis of public investment in the education sector.

Data on key indicators for citizen security was extracted from statistical logs of the National Police. Additional data on femicides and public perceptions of security was obtained from studies (surveys and systematizations) conducted by civil society organizations<sup>8</sup> during or containing specific results for 2015-2018.

## II. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

The Republic of Nicaragua is divided into 15 departments and two (2) autonomous regions made up of 153 municipalities. According to population projections, by 2016 the country had a total of 6.3 million inhabitants (INIDE, 2015) of which 3.1 million were men (49.3%) and 3.2 million were women (50.7%) for a gender ratio of 97.4 men for every 100 women (Estadísticas de Centroamérica 2017). According to area of residence, the National Institute of Information Development (*Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo, INIDE*) data (2015) indicates that by 2016 the urban population reached 3,676,119 and the rural population 2,651,808 inhabitants.

Nationally, life expectancy at birth is 75.7 years for both sexes (72.5 years for men and 78.8 for women). The total growth rate indicator shows a value of 10.67 per thousand, indicating that the population in the five-year period 2015-2020 will increase by 10.6 people per thousand. In other words, there will be

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<sup>6</sup> Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas

<sup>7</sup> While consulting key actors for this report, an environment of deep distrust was noted. This distrust penetrates different spaces and processes, especially when it comes to providing information on ongoing processes (projects) or assessments of the current situation. This greatly limited the scope and depth of this report.

<sup>8</sup> The observatory *Voces contra la Violencia* (Voices Against Violence: Catholics for the Right to Choose and the Center for Studies and Information on Multiethnic Women-CEIMM/URACCAN), Mass Media Campaign by FADCANIC and the Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policies (*Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas, IEEPP*).

an annual population growth – in that same five-year period – of 1.06% per year (INIDE, 2015). This places Nicaragua with a moderate to low population growth.

The population pyramid (Figure 1) shows that the majority of the country's inhabitants are young, with a slightly narrow base in the early ages and a little wider in the ages of young adults; 46% of people are between the ages of 10-34 years. Similarly, the dependency ratio in Nicaragua is 57.7%, which means for every 100 people of working age; there are 58 dependents (0-14 and 65+ years).

The crude birth rate is 21 live births per 1,000 inhabitants and 53.9% of the female population is of childbearing age. Nicaragua has one of the highest fertility rates in adolescents aged 15-19 years in Central America, with 88.1 births per 1,000 women in this age group. This is above the regional rate (70) and one of the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the average rate is 64 births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15-19 years (*Estadísticas de Centroamérica 2017*).

The Caribbean Coast covers about 50% of the national territory and is composed of the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN) and the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS). According to census data, these autonomous regions make up 13.8% of the total population of Nicaragua. Between 1995 and 2005, the RACCN had the highest annual population growth rate in the country (4.9%) and greater than the RACCS (1.2%). This highlights differences in demographic dynamics between the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions.

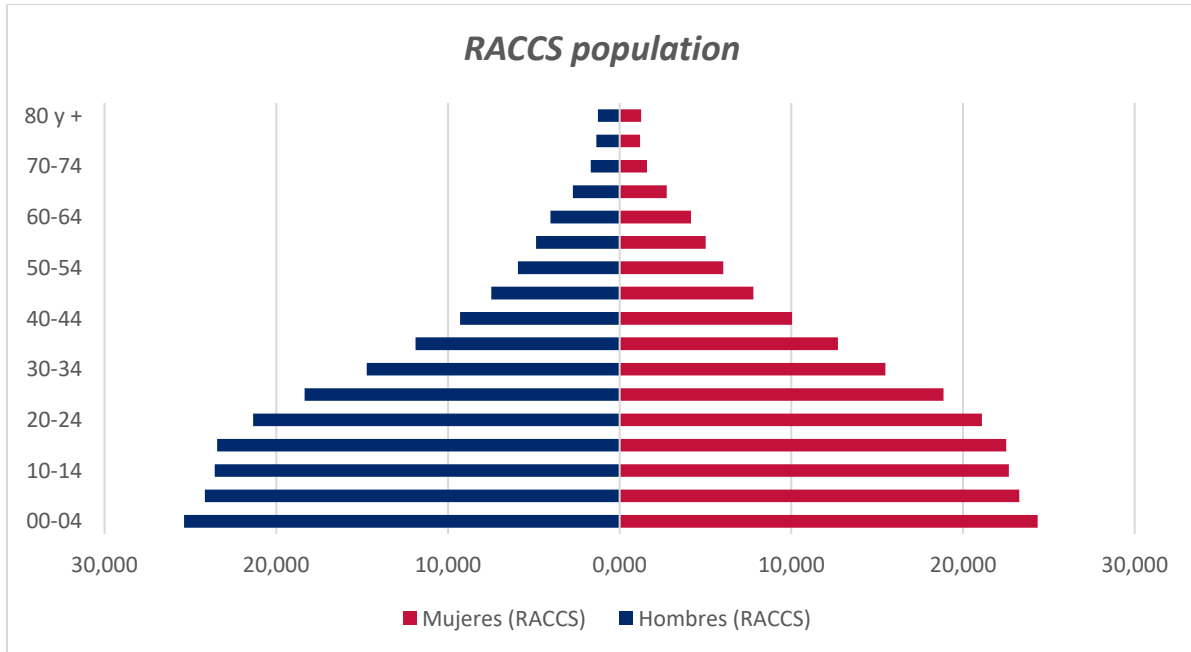
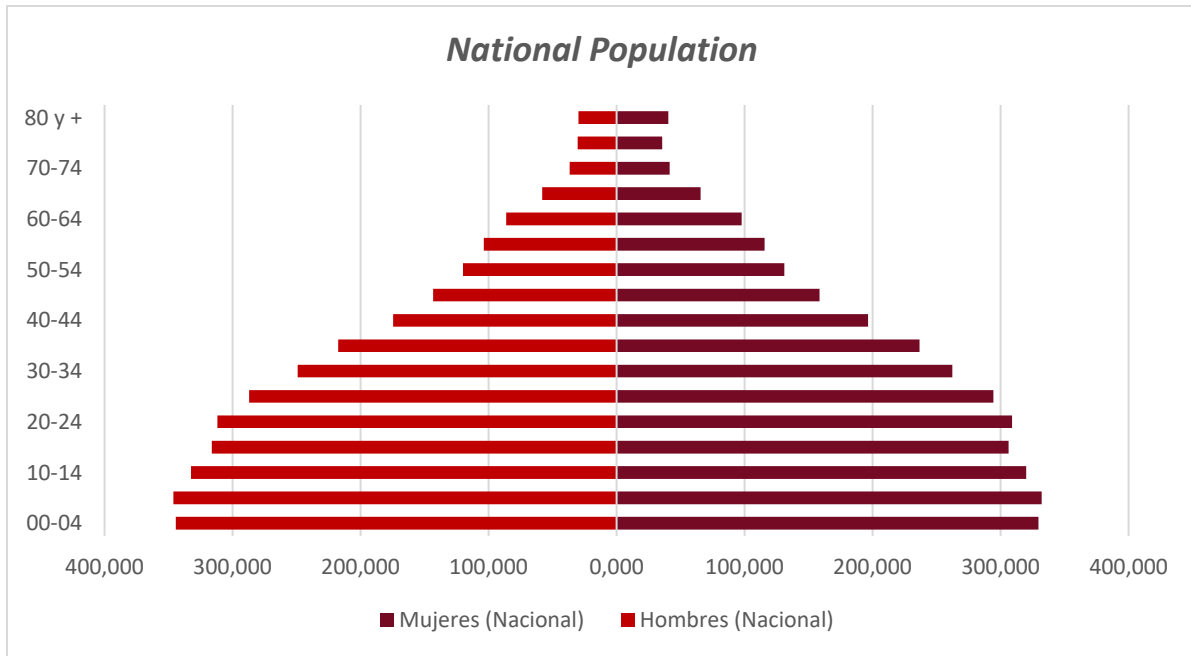
The RACCS covers an area of 27,260 km<sup>2</sup> and is composed of 12 municipalities (Nueva Guinea, El Rama, Bluefields, Bocana de Paiwas, Muelle de Los Bueyes, La Cruz del Río Grande de Matagalpa, El Tortuguero, El Ayote, Kukra Hill, Laguna de Perlas, Corn Island and Desembocadura del Río Grande de Matagalpa) with the regional capital in Bluefields. According to INIDE population estimates, in 2018 the RACCS represented 6.22% of the national population (402,201 persons), of which 43% (175,426 persons) lived in urban areas and 56% (226,856 persons) in rural areas (INIDE, 2017)<sup>9</sup>.

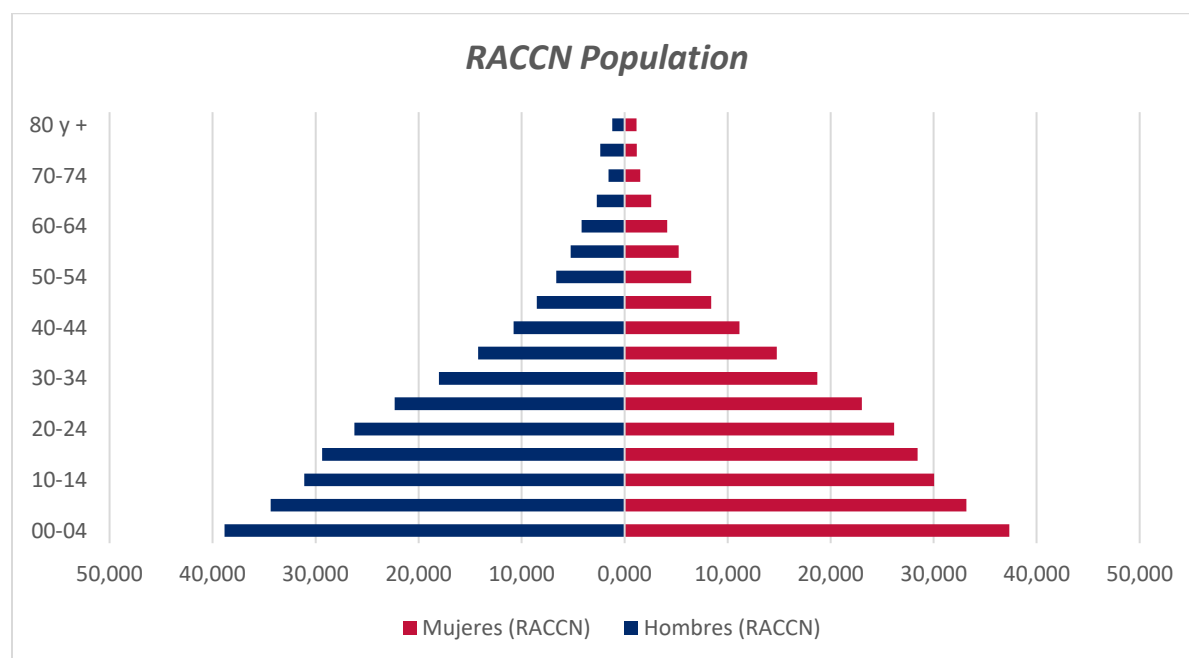
The RACCN covers an area of 32,819.68 km<sup>2</sup> and is composed of eight municipalities (Waspám, Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka, Bonanza, Siuna, Rosita, Waslala and Mulukuku) with the regional capital in Bilwi, Puerto Cabezas. Population estimates indicate that 510,053 people live in the RACCN; 177,092 (33.5%) in urban areas and 338,961 (66.4%) in rural areas.

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<sup>9</sup> Official population estimates do not present a disaggregation of the population by ethnic identity. However, previous reports have indicated the following population structure by self-identified ethnic identity in RACCS: 64% Mestizo, 22.5% Creole, 10% Miskitu, 2% Rama, 0.1% Mayagna-Ulwa and the rest do not identify with any ethnic group (Zamora, 2016).

**Figure I. Total national and regional population estimates by sex and age group, 2018**





Source: Annual Statistic, INIDE, 2017

The population of the RACCS and the RACCN is mostly young as is the population nationwide. Both population pyramids show broad bases corresponding to children and adolescents and bulges in the lower middle linked to the demographic growth of the young population.

In the RACCS, 67% of the population is between 0 and 29 years of age and 61% fall within economically productive ages (15-64 years) with a dependency ratio of 39 (0-14 years and 65+). In the RACCN, 70% of the population is between 0 and 29 years and 57% fall within economically productive ages with a dependency ratio of 42.7. As shown in Figure 1, the population structure does not show relevant differentiation by sex.

The data described above for both Nicaragua and the Caribbean Coast as a whole accounts for the challenges that demographic dynamics entail for public policies at national and regional levels. The data highlights adolescent fertility as a factor associated with school dropout, violence and unions at an early age, as well as one of the main elements that reinforces the generational cycle of poverty. For the growing population of economically productive age (15-64 years), the challenges are great, as are the opportunities.

As several studies have pointed out, demographic data signals a need for quality education and access to relevant health services by age group, as well as formal employment opportunities that strengthen the capacities of adolescents and young people. Without appropriate interventions, the country will not seize the opportunity for growth and development, but rather reinforce structural conditions of exclusion and poverty.

### III. SECURITY SITUATION

Central America presents two main contexts of citizen security. The first is made up of countries in the northern triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) whose homicide rates in 2018 range from 51 in El Salvador, 40 in Honduras and 22.4 in Guatemala. This endemic situation makes these countries among the most violent regions in the world even though there is no armed conflict. The second is made up of the southern countries of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama with lower homicide rates (11.7 in Costa Rica, 11 in Nicaragua and 9.6 in Panama).

Nicaragua held the lowest homicide rate in Central America from 2014-2017. However, in April 2018 a complex socio-political situation developed in Nicaragua resulting in social protests. According to figures from specialized human rights organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), during the period of the protests – considering the possibility of missing and underreported data – the death toll from firearms rose to 325 people (including 21 police officers and 24 girls, boys and adolescents) with more than 2,000 people injured and 777 people arrested and prosecuted<sup>10</sup>.

In comparison, homicide rates in Central America have declined over the past decade. Honduras and Guatemala represent the two countries in the region that have the greatest decrease in homicide rates.

**Table I. Central America: Homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants 2008-2018**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Guatemala</b>	46.5	46.5	41.6	38.6	39.9	34.3	37	29.5	27.3	26.1	22.4
<b>Honduras</b>	60.8	70.7	81.8	91.4	90.4	79	66	59	59	42.8	40
<b>El Salvador</b>	51.7	70.9	64.1	69.9	41.2	43.7	61	102.9	81.2	60	51
<b>Nicaragua</b>	13	14	13.5	12.5	11.3	9	8.7	8	7	7	11
<b>Costa Rica</b>	11.4	11.4	11.3	10	8.5	8.7	9.5	11.4	11.8	12.1	11.72
<b>Panama</b>	18.4	22.6	20.6	20.3	17.3	17.3	15	11.1	9.3	9.2	9.6

Source: *Fundación para la Paz y la Democracia* (Foundation for Peace and Democracy, FUNPADEM)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a homicide rate greater than 10 per 100,000 inhabitants is considered a characteristic of endemic violence as found in countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and, to a lesser extent, Costa Rica and Panama (at least until 2015). (*Estadísticas de Centroamérica* 2017).

Nicaragua presents a turning point in 2018, with one of its main characteristics being the lack of data sources and objective security indicators. The following sections present security indicators that highlight gaps in citizen security at both the national level and the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua.

<sup>10</sup> For more information: <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/docs/anual/2018/docs/IA2018cap.4B.NI-es.pdf>



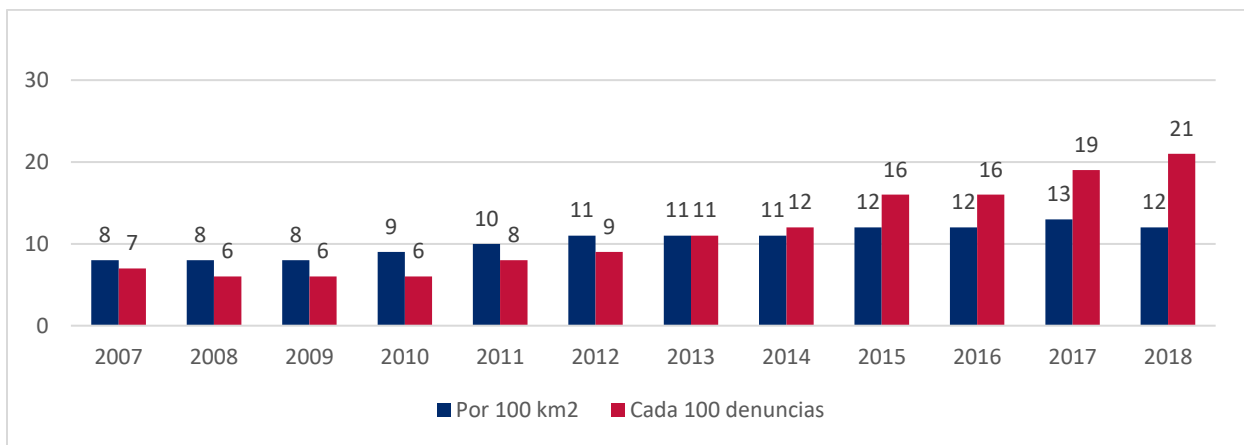
### 3.1. Regional and National Context: homicide rate<sup>11</sup>

In Nicaragua, the Demographic Crime Index (*Índice Delictivo Demográfico, IDD*) indicates that in 2017 the National Police received a total of 1,267 complaints per 100,000 inhabitants and 1,104 in 2018<sup>12</sup>. Of the total complaints received and cases resolved, the effectiveness of the National Police<sup>13</sup> is estimated at 91% in 2017 and 89% in 2018. The crimes of greatest frequency and social impact between 2017 and 2018 were robbery with intimidation, injuries, sex crimes, theft, robbery and homicides.

In 2018, the National Police reported having 12 police officers per 100km<sup>2</sup>, 21 per 100 complaints and 234 per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of police officers per 100,000 inhabitants decreased from 241 in 2017.

The overall risk of being a victim of crime was one crime for every 91 people in 2017 and one crime for every 79 people in 2018. This represents deterioration in coverage and risk of being a victim, which has resulted in an increase in the homicide rate from 7 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 to 11 in 2018; a rate similar to that reported in 2012, which represents deterioration in the security levels of the country<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 2. Police coverage per 100 km<sup>2</sup> and per 100 complaints 2007-2018**



Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2018

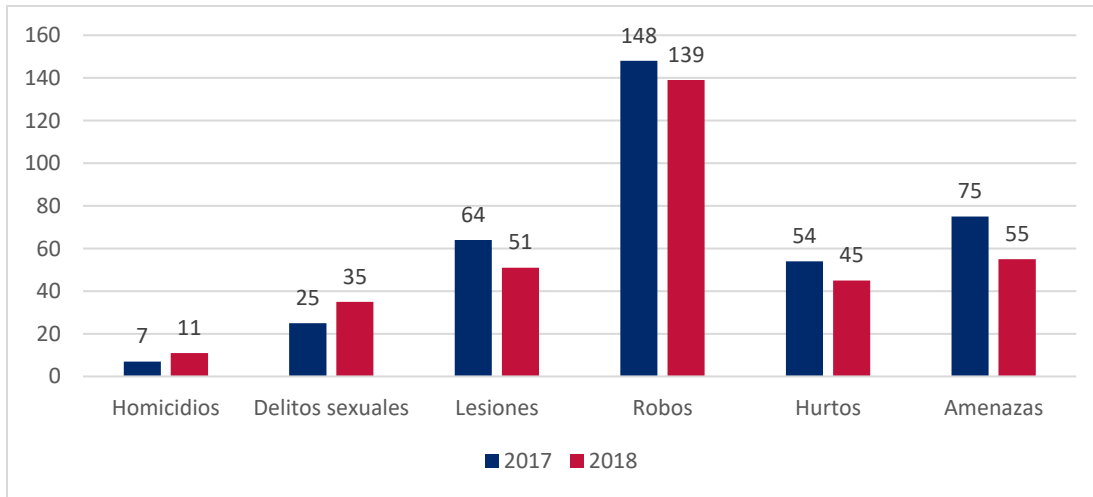
<sup>11</sup> Homicide is one of the most complete, comparable and accurate indicators to measure violence. Intentional homicide (along with other violent crimes) is a threat to the population in that its impact goes beyond the loss of human lives and can generate an environment of fear and uncertainty. Therefore, homicide data can be an important tool for monitoring security conditions in a given social environment.

<sup>12</sup> 2018 represents an atypical year given the complex situation that the country experienced, which affected the registration of complaints and citizen's trust in the institution. Given this situation, services provided and complaints registered by the police during this period are likely to have a strong bias.

<sup>13</sup> Number of complaints filed versus the number of cases resolved

<sup>14</sup> Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2018

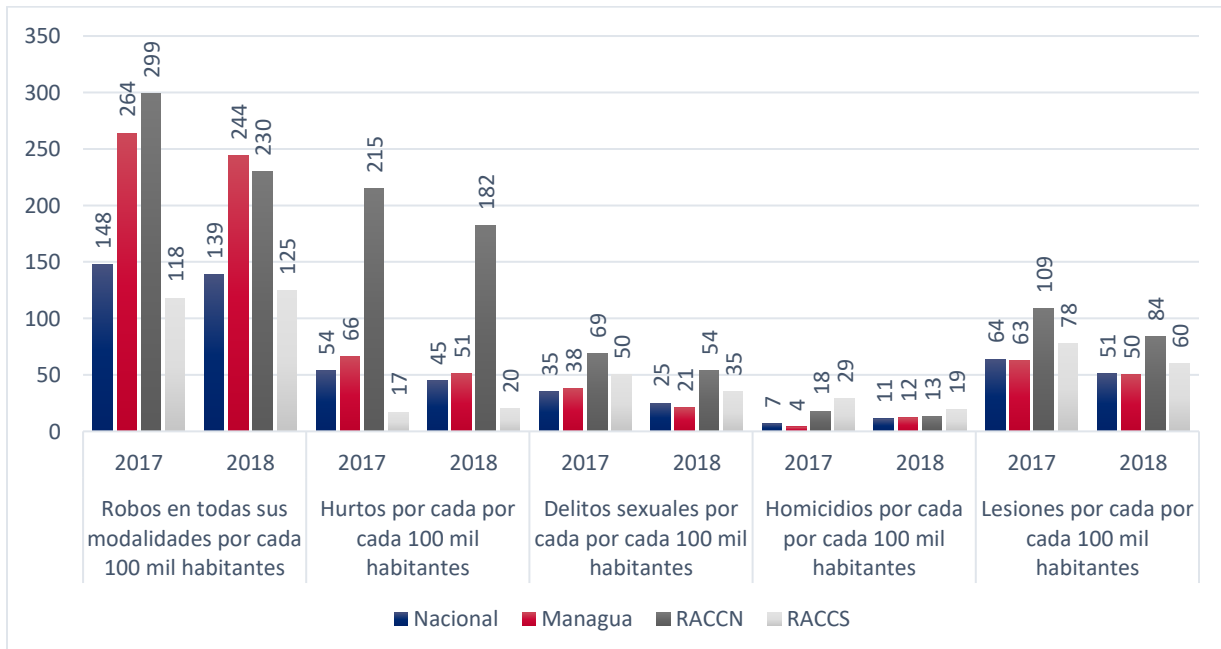
**Figure 3. Crimes of greater frequency and social impact per 100,000 inhabitants, 2017-2018**



Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2018

The occurrence of crimes tends to have a greater incidence in three main areas of the country: the municipality of Managua, RACCN and RACCS. Both autonomous regions have the highest number of cases of sex crimes with 54 cases the RACCN and 35 cases the RACCS in 2018. Although these cases have decreased compared to the previous year (2017), they are far from the national average of 25 cases, which is quite high if compared to the departments of Jinotega or Estelí with 18 and 19 cases, respectively in 2018. The RACCN is the area with the highest number of crime cases.

**Figure 4. Main crimes by region 2017-2018**

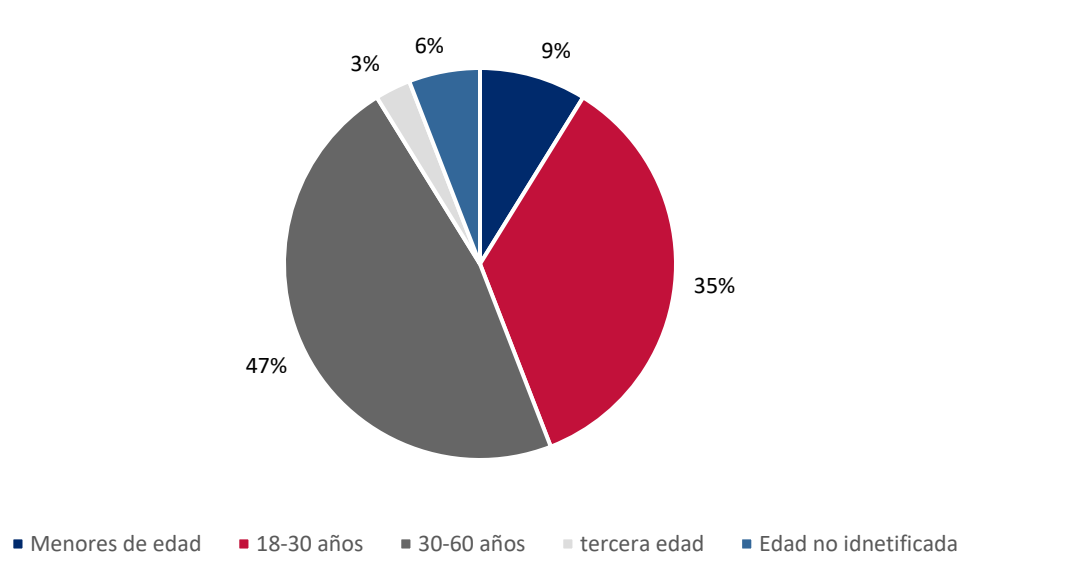


Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2018

The National Police registers 25 cases of femicide in 2017 and 23 in 2018. This data differs significantly from the count made by the feminist movement, CDD. This organization recorded a total of 51 femicides in 2017 and 61 in 2018 (CDD, 2019), from cases published in the written press. One explanation for the difference in the registration of cases is the definition of femicide. The National Police and justice system define femicides as those cases where the victim (woman) had a relationship with the aggressor; CDD defines femicides as all cases where women are victims of patriarchal sexist violence, understanding that women are victims of crime because of their sex in any circumstance.

The gap between the number of cases registered by public institutions and CDD is based on the typology and classification established by the State and carried out through the National Police. Rather than focusing on the occurrence of crime itself, this definition uses a subjective interpretation of where the crime develops and the viciousness or excessive violence with which the action is carried out.

**Figure 5. Femicides by age, first semester 2019**



**Source:** *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir*, 2019

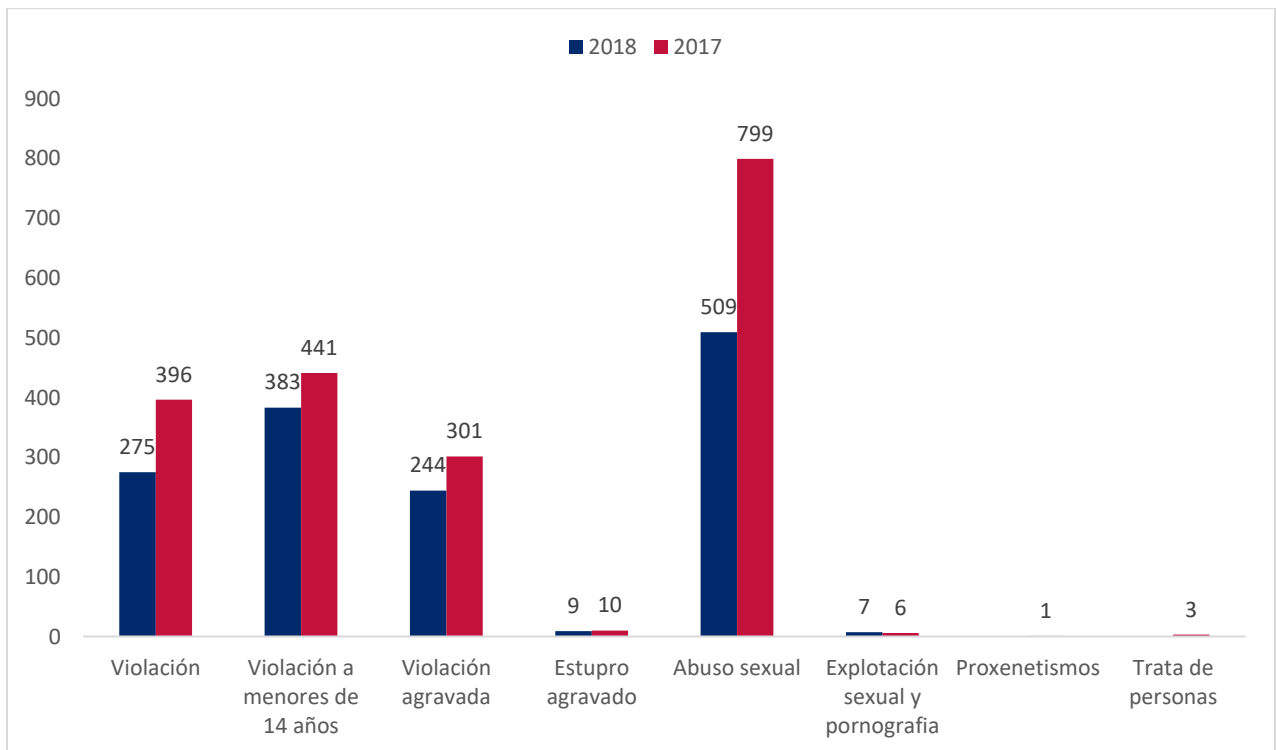
According to historical data from CDD, victims can be divided into two main age ranges: young women between the ages of 18-30 years and women 30-60 years. From a demographic perspective, the most affected population groups are economically productive groups, which has negative effects on the family environment that often go unnoticed, such as psychological sequelae, orphanhood, social stigma, etc.

Image I. Femicide Registry 2010-2019



Source: *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir*, 2019. Image taken from *El Nuevo Diario*.

Figure 6. Crimes against sexual freedom and bodily integrity, 2017-2018

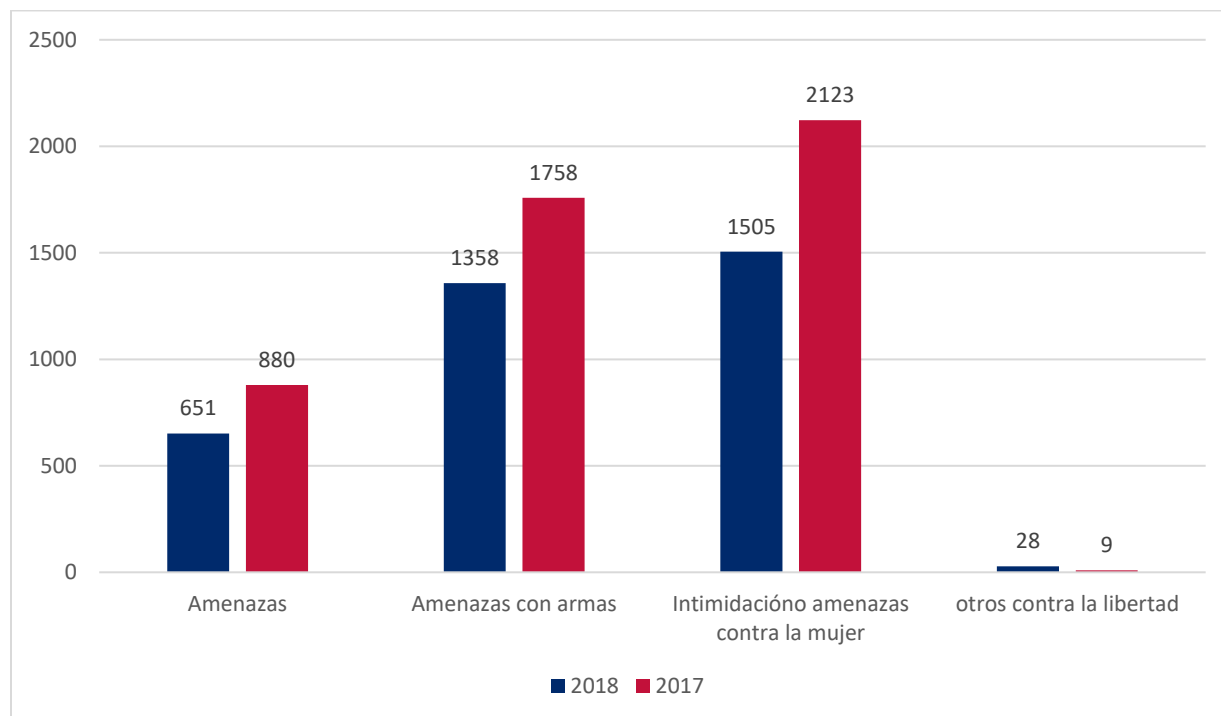


Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2017-2018

Regarding crimes against sexual freedom and bodily integrity, complaints of sexual abuse and different types of rape (aggravated, to children under 14 years) present data that – given the type of crimes and almost normalization of this situation among complaints registered in 2017 and 2018 – must be taken into account for the design of policies, strategies and citizen security programs.

Among crimes against freedom, armed threats and threats or intimidation against women held significant weight during both years of interest. This data indicates the risks involved with the possession of weapons and women's exposure to major crimes, especially given that in the cycle of gender-based violence (GBV), threats or intimidation prelude situations that have greater implications on sexual freedom or bodily integrity. They may also be accompanied by psychological abuse and property violence, both of which constitute a crime according to Articles 11 and 12 of Law No. 779 Comprehensive Law on Violence Against Women<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 7. Crimes against freedom, 2017-2018**



**Source:** Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2018.

This type of situation restricts and harms women's rights. Furthermore, it constitutes evidence of a patriarchal culture that, far from presenting optimistic scenarios, marks a systematic deterioration of the situation and a public health problem that if not attended to in a timely manner could lead to a public and private naturalization of GBV.

Physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, threats and economic deprivation are all part of GBV. Determining the manifestations of this crime involves conducting an in-depth victimization analysis of National Police data and records from the Public Ministry, Specialized Gender-based Violence Court and Institute of Legal Medicine. A better understanding of GBV through data management can contribute –

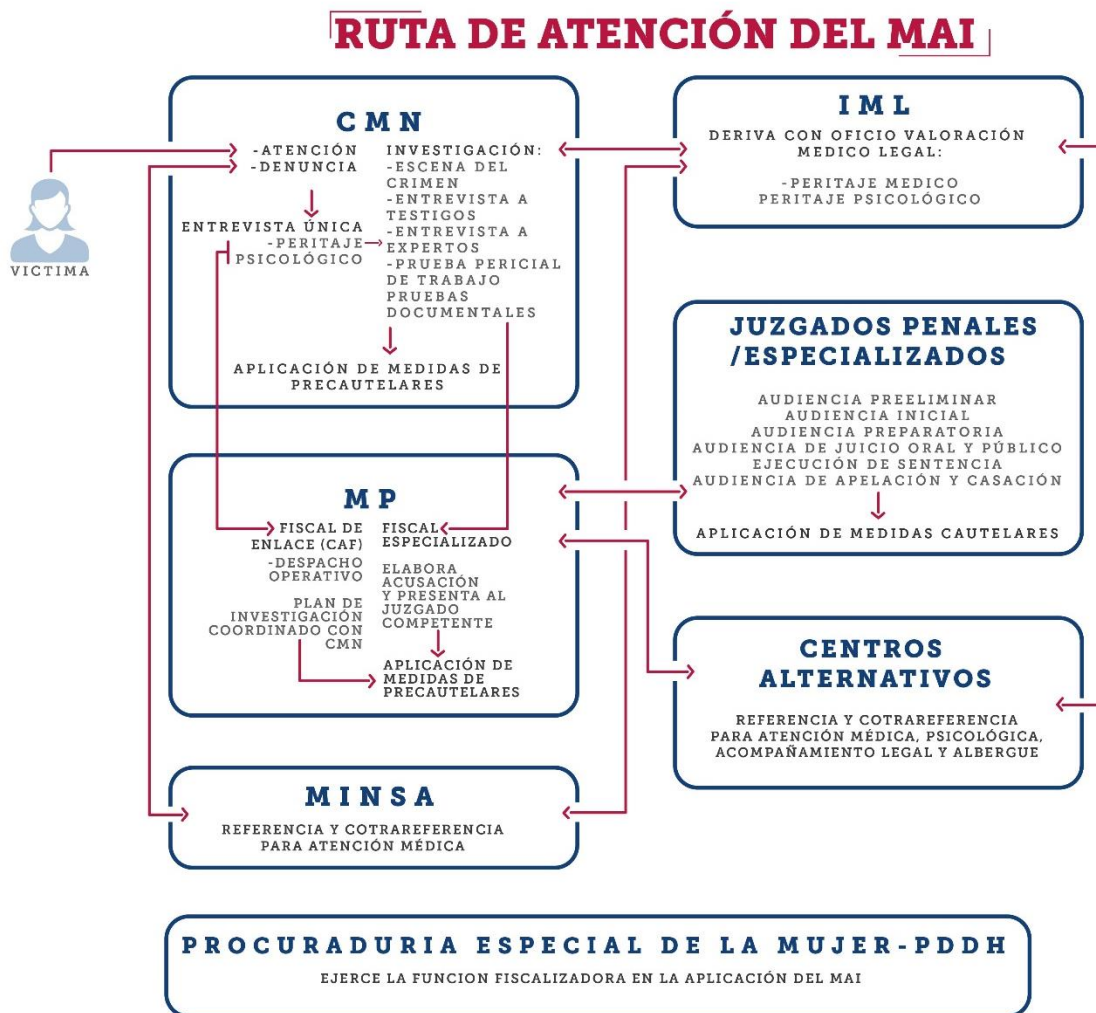
<sup>15</sup> The criminal classifications contemplated in this law are not integrated in the Statistical Yearbook of the National Police.

together with other measures such as raising awareness, work in masculinities and providing legal support to victims – to reducing the most lethal expressions of GBV, such as femicides and sex crimes.

The approval of Law No. 779 in 2012 marked an important advancement for the State in the sanction of GBV and the adoption of prevention measures in accordance with international provisions. However, legal reforms and its subsequent regulation (2014) have been categorized by different women's movements as a setback in the fight against GBV at the national level. In turn, the regulatory changes and administrative restructuring of the National Police that transferred the care structure from the Commissioners of Women, Children and Adolescents to the Directorate of Judicial Assistance, have contributed to less effective access to justice for victims of violence.

In formal terms, the Comprehensive Care Model (*Modelo de Atención Integral*, MAI) for victims of GBV has not changed. The institutional roles of the National Police, the Public Ministry, the Institute of Legal Medicine, and the Criminal Courts Specialized in Gender-based Violence continue to be those established by Law No. 779 and the Criminal Procedure Code. However, in practice, key actors in the RACCS who are linked to the model express that the pathway for the comprehensive care of victims of GBV is not very effective.

Image 2. Pathway for comprehensive care of victims of gender-based violence



Source: Judicial Authority Nicaragua

The key factor of this ineffectiveness is the “physical” absence of the Commissioner, which has limited the capacity of the justice system to process the crimes established in Law No. 779. Currently, personnel involved in receiving complaints do not have the awareness, knowledge and skills necessary to work with victims of this crime. In addition, the case investigation process does not always integrate a single interview (i.e. the person who receives the complaint is not the same person who investigates the crime), which generates revictimization by requiring a woman who has been a victim of violence to repeat the facts two or three times before the report is complete and submitted to the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

This change within the National Police has also impacted the classification of the complaints by using broad criminal charges such as domestic violence, instead of continuing to use the specific charges established in Law No. 779. This makes the different manifestations of GBV invisible. In addition, the victims do not receive clarity on the process from the current pathway or the institutions involved,

which is detrimental considering that a woman who is a victim of violence and decides to file a complaint is already in a vulnerable situation that puts her at recurring risk.

Given the ineffective response of the current pathway, the lack of coordination between civil society organizations and State institutions to care for victims of GBV creates a negative effect. In addition, there are few organizations on the Caribbean Coast that continue to provide care to women who are victims of violence and many of those that do exist are located in the RACCN<sup>16</sup>.

The incidence of GBV and its consequences indicate the urgency of resuming intersectoral actions between State institutions (Police, Judicial Authority, Public Prosecutor) and civil society organizations that prioritize the victim's interests at the regional level; starting with the financial, material and capacity limitations that currently exist<sup>17</sup>.

Although official data from the National Police accounts for the main crimes that affect citizen security, the people's perception of the police complements the official data. In 2018, the Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (*Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas*, IEEPP) carried out the X Survey on perceptions of citizen security. The survey showed that the population considered the main security problems of the country to be robberies (47.3%), traffic accidents (37.7%), violence against women (24.7%), armed assault (14.8%), gang-generated violence (11.4%), and domestic violence (10.4%) (IEEPP, 2018, p. 14). With regard to GBV, more women than men tend to perceive this situation as a security problem.

By territory, GBV is perceived as a greater problem in Managua (32.8%), Western Nicaragua (31.4%) and the Caribbean Coast (22.1%). This data is consistent with the registration of crimes by territories of both public institutions and non-governmental organizations. The greater visibility of GBV in these regions may result from two fundamental causes: the role of written and television media and the role of women's organizations to promote the reporting of cases and care for the victim, as well as the prevention of these crimes.

With regard to perceptions of security, between December 2017 and July 2019 perceived insecurity has increased at the national level. When asked, "Do you feel safe or unsafe here in your residential sector?" positive responses decreased from 90.2% in December 2017 to 72.4% in April 2019 (a figure similar to that recorded in July 2014). This captures a very particular circumstance in the country, where irrespective of the geographic sector, uncertainty and insecurity reflect consensus on the security variable.

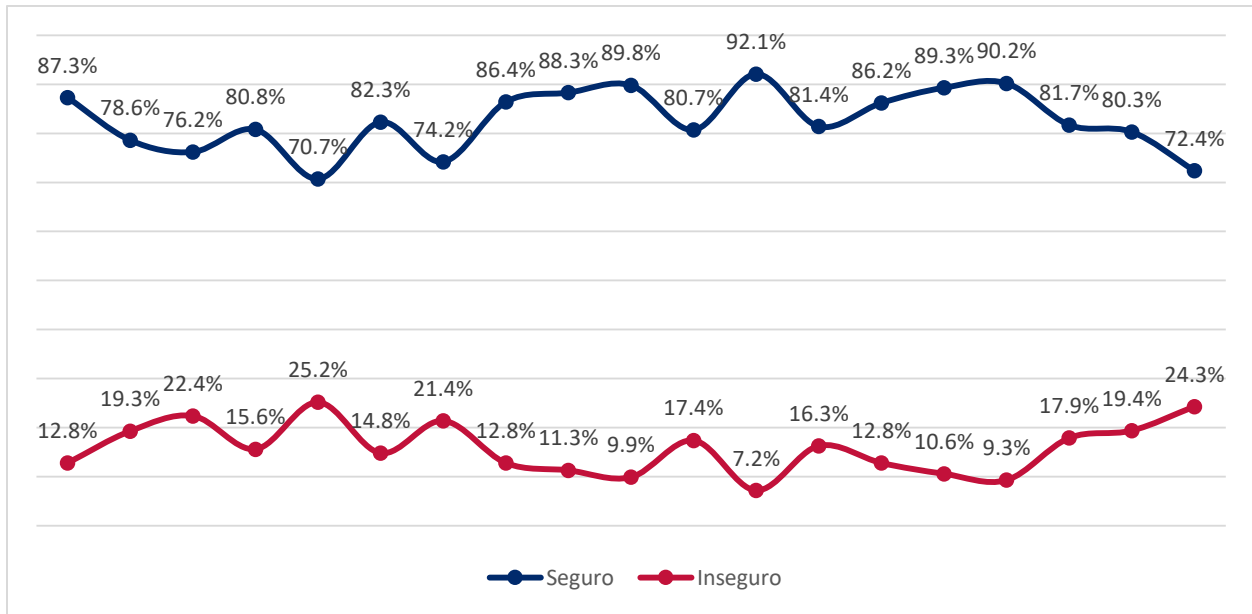
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<sup>16</sup> In the RACCN, the Nidia White Women's Movement, *Voces Caribeñas* and the *Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas de la Costa Atlántica* (Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast, AMICA) focus on the prevention of GBV. Nidia White, is the main organization leading actions of psychological care and legal support to women who are victims of violence. In the RACCS, women's organizations, associations and movements that undertook similar initiatives years ago suspended activities in 2017-2018. This may be due to two factors: limitations on external funding from the international cooperation and the limitations of dialogue and coordination with the justice system.

<sup>17</sup> Limitations include the broad territory, the lack of different institutions in the municipalities of the RACCN and RACCS and the relevance of the care model for the ethnic-cultural contexts of the region.



**Figure 8. Trends in perception of security/insecurity, 2012-2018**



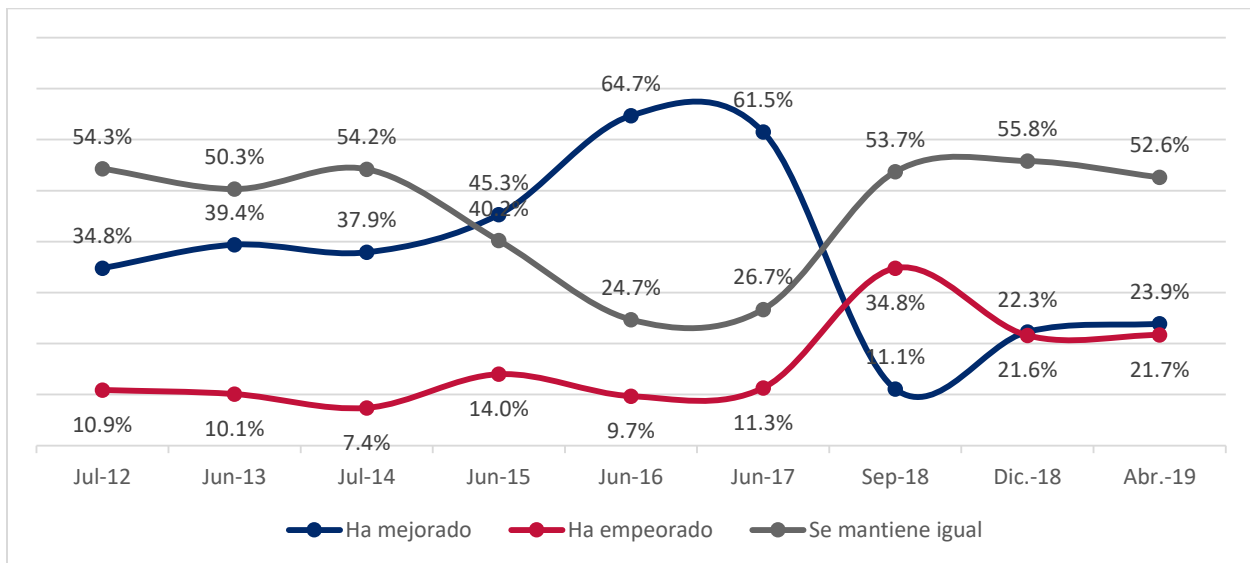
Source: *Sistema de Monitoreo de la Opinión Pública (SISMO) 2019*

The spaces that the population perceives most secure are the home (93.6%), followed by the neighborhood (94.9%), with very low percentages in other spaces such as schools, parks, work exits or other public places. Women expressed situations that make them feel particularly insecure including different forms of street harassment (55.1%: morbid looks, cat calls and whistles), armed robbery (43.3%), and being victim of a traffic accident (10.3%).

These security perceptions vary according to context and circumstance, but as of 2018 there is a turning point not only on the institutional role and work of the National Police but also for its professionalism. This is reflected in the results of the fifty-nine editions of the Public Opinion Monitoring System (*Sistema de Monitoreo de la Opinión Pública, SISMO*) as related to citizen security<sup>18</sup>. The data reflect a deterioration of the levels of insecurity as of September 2018 when 34.8% considered that the situation has worsened, thus reaching the highest percentage of the last six years with a slight improvement in December 2018 (21.6%) and April 2019 (21.7%).

<sup>18</sup> Question asked, “In the last six months has citizen security in your residential sector worsened, improved, or remained the same?”

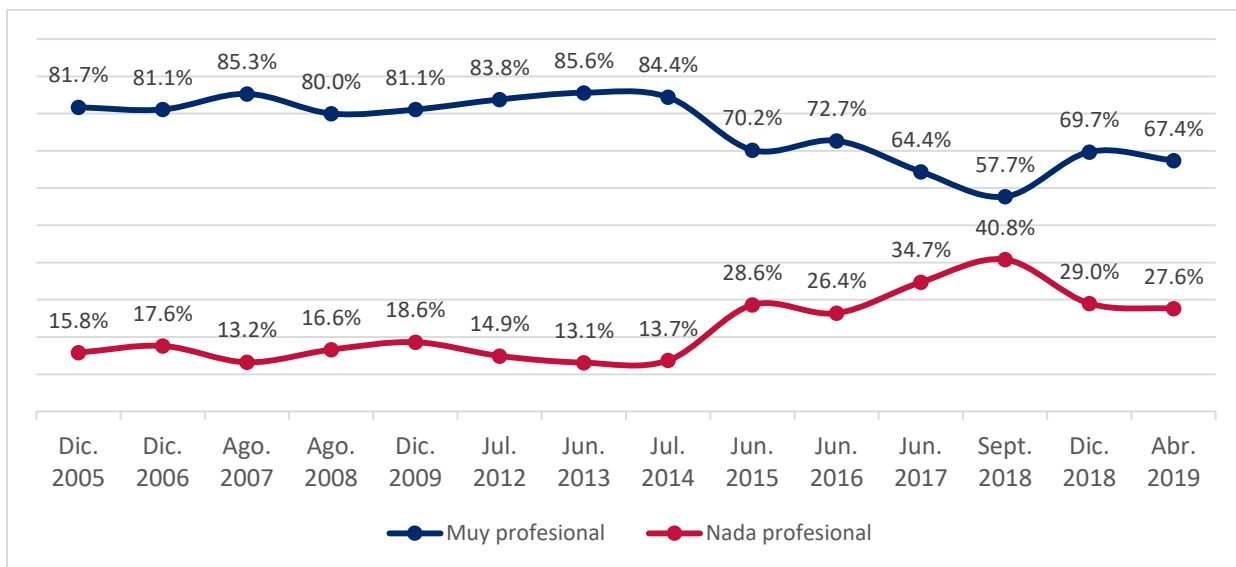
**Figure 9. Perception of security in the residential sector in the last six months (2012-2019)**



Source: *Sistema de Monitoreo de la Opinión Pública (SISMO) 2019*

In addition, since 2015, the rating of the institutional performance of the National Police tends to reflect a negative trend, calling it “unprofessional”. This perception peaked at 40.8% in September 2018, but has improved, reaching 27.6% in April 2019. Therefore, both police institutions and their leaders must build the trust of the population in the medium and long-term. The areas of police work that receive the highest scores are the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking, domestic and sexual violence and work they do in the community in general.

**Figure 10. Perception of the degree of professionalism of the National Police**



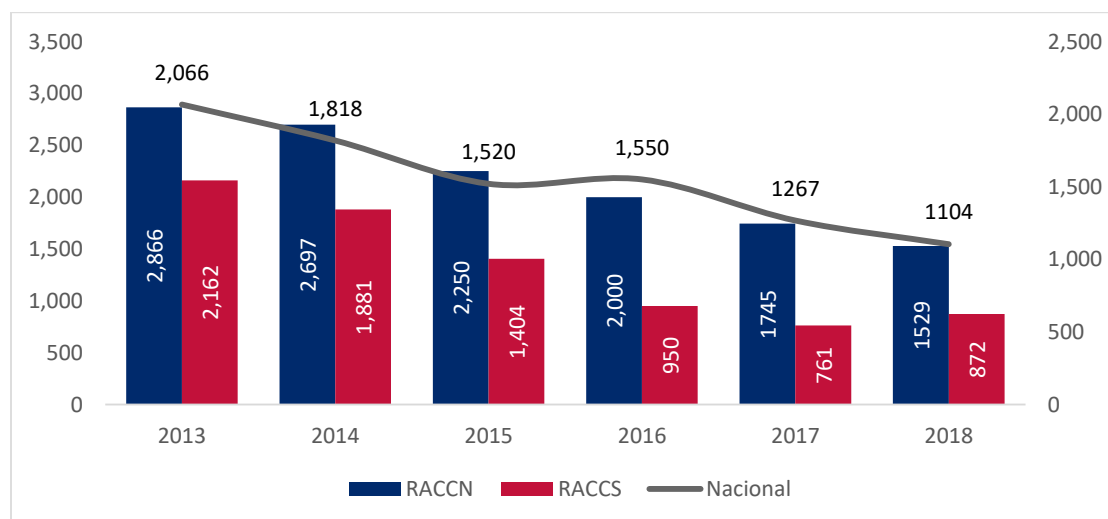
Source: *Sistema de Monitoreo de la Opinión Pública (SISMO) 2019*

Overall, citizens' perceptions and National Police data indicate that Nicaragua, in comparison with the rest of the Central American countries, maintains conditions of relative security. However, indicators such as the risk of being a victim of a crime against life, different forms of rape, sexual abuse and harassment, as well as traffic accidents are evidence of insecurity and the risks faced by the Nicaraguan population (particularly women). The data should be monitored and, depending on the findings, comprehensive responses should be developed through specific policies and programs that address the main forms of violence that affect citizen security and fundamental human rights.

### 3.2. Security in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast (RACCS and RACCN<sup>19</sup>)

In terms of security, the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua is one of the regions of the country where interest has focused on the prevention/fight against drug trafficking and the sale/consumption of drugs. However, in the last decade the frequency of crimes against the life, sexual freedom and bodily integrity of people, as well as against property, has reached higher rates than those reported nationwide.

Figure 11. Complaints filed per 100,000 inhabitants



Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2013-2018

Between 2017 and 2018 the reporting rate of complaints per 100,000 inhabitants has been reduced at the national level and in the RACCN. However, in the RACCS the reporting rate increased by 111 complaints during this period to reach a total of 872 complaints in 2018. Although the reporting rates in the RACCN were well above the national rate, this indicator improved in 2017-2018.

The causes of the reduction in the rate of complaints in both regions of the Caribbean Coast have not been studied. However, national research includes hypotheses for victimization analysis (IEEPP, 2016, p 22) indicating that 51% of people who have been victims of crimes have filed complaints with the National Police. The research indicates that the 48.9% who did not file complaints cite reasons such as lack of trust, poor efficiency in the institutions responsible, waste of time and money, mistreatment of

<sup>19</sup> For the National Police, the RACCS is made up of the municipalities of Bluefields, Laguna de Perlas, Kukra Hill, Corn Island, La Desembocadura de Río Grande, El Tortuguero and la Cruz de Río Grande. The municipalities of El Ramam New Guinea and Muelle de los Bueyes appear in the Statistical Yearbooks of the National Police as "Zelaya Central", and for the purpose of these reports are not part of the RACCS. In the case of the RACCN, the National Police records only consider part of the Puerto Cabezas and Waspám region. Rosita, Bonanza, Siuna, Mulukukú and Prinzapolka are part of the mining triangle.

citizens, the crime was not serious and for lack of care and response from the Police. The above elements can be used to expand on the interpretation of the reduction of complaints in both autonomous regions.

**Table 2. Police per 100,000 inhabitants**

	2016	2017	2018
National	234	245	242
RACCN	203	207	206
RACCS	186	174	182
Río San Juan	212	218	216
Triángulo Minero	122	119	125

Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2016-2018

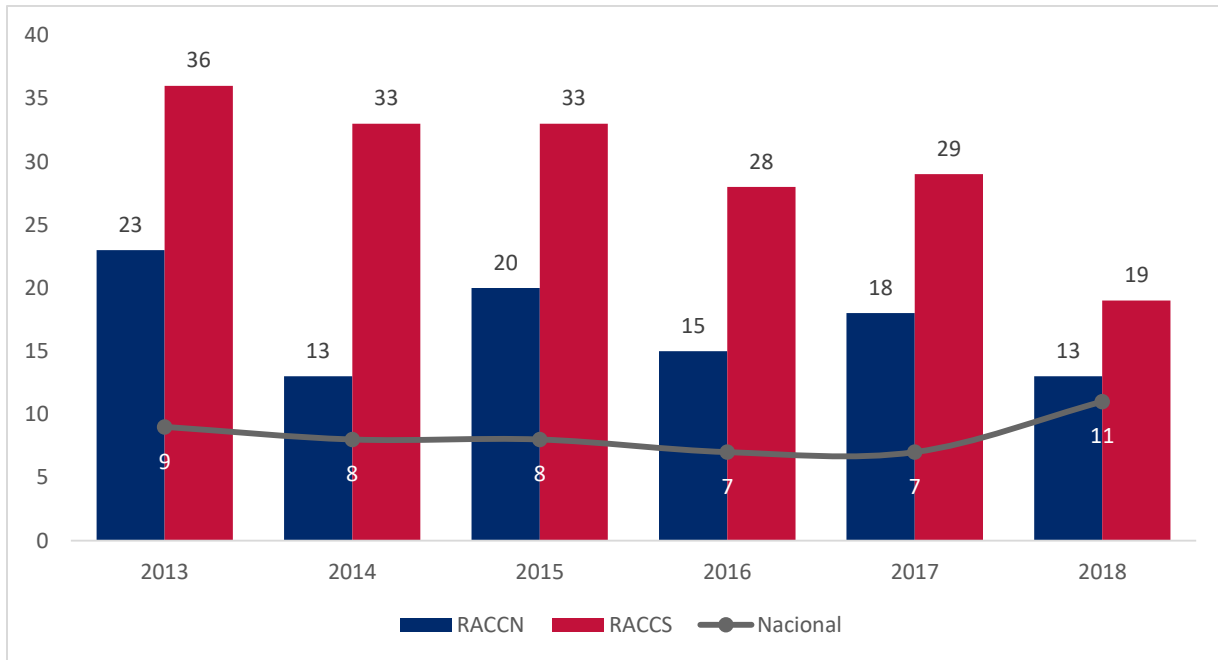
The number of police officers<sup>20</sup> in both autonomous regions has increased marginally, but progressively. The RACCN registered 207 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017, decreasing to 206 in 2018 while in the RACCS, the number of police officers increased from 174 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 to 182 in 2018.

According to the National Police, its effectiveness in the RACCN was 86% in 2017 and 91.6% in 2018. In the RACCS, the effectiveness was 94.5% in 2017 and decreased to 90.2% in 2018. In both years, the effectiveness of the police force in these regions is greater than that registered at the national level. This is especially notable when considering the territorial dispersion of the Caribbean Coast and the limited resources of the National Police.

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<sup>20</sup> The number of police officers per 100,000 inhabitants constitutes an important indicator of institutional action in favor of citizen security; allowing the analysis, to a certain extent, of the role of the State in the provision of elements that contribute to citizen security. The result of this indicator is determined by the population density in a specific territory. If the population density of a territory is high, a greater volume of police officers will be needed, in order to provide an effective response to the needs of the population. This indicator has an inverse relationship between the number of effective police officers and the population of a territory. In the RACCN and RACCS, the indicator shows a higher value than in departments such as Chinandega, Jinotega, or the national average. This indicates that the number of police officers in these territories is lower as compared to the population they must protect. Converseley, in the RACCS, a certain number of police officers must guarantee the security of a smaller population.

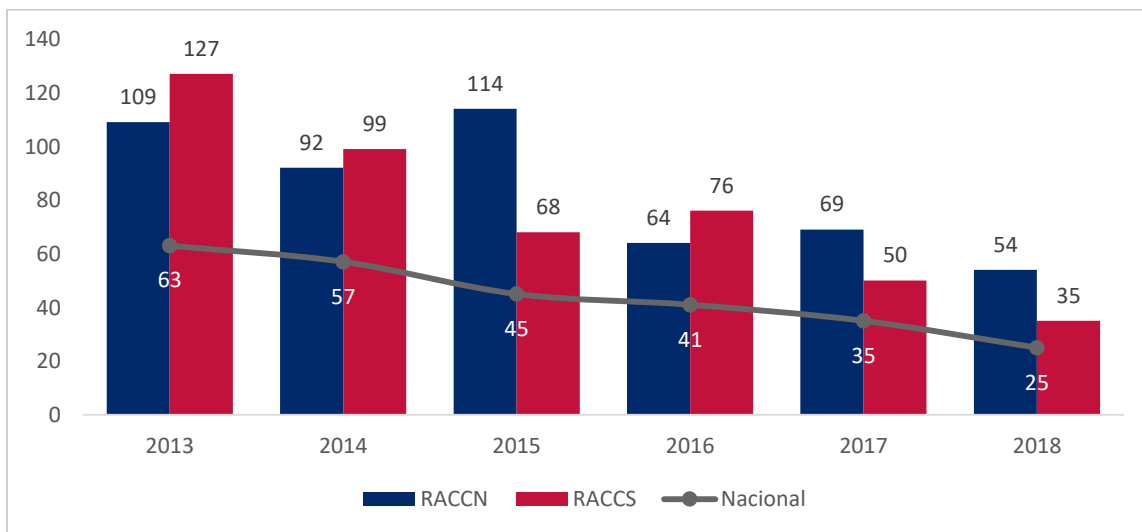
**Figure 12. Homicides per 100,000 inhabitants**



**Source:** Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2013-2018

The homicide rate in the RACCN and RACCS during 2017-2018 tends to be higher than the national average and greater in the RACCS municipalities (Figure 12). The frequency of this type of crime is an important indicator of the levels of insecurity in both autonomous regions and merits further research as the rates demonstrate the risk and fragility/vulnerability of the bodily integrity – particularly life – of citizenship on the Caribbean Coast.

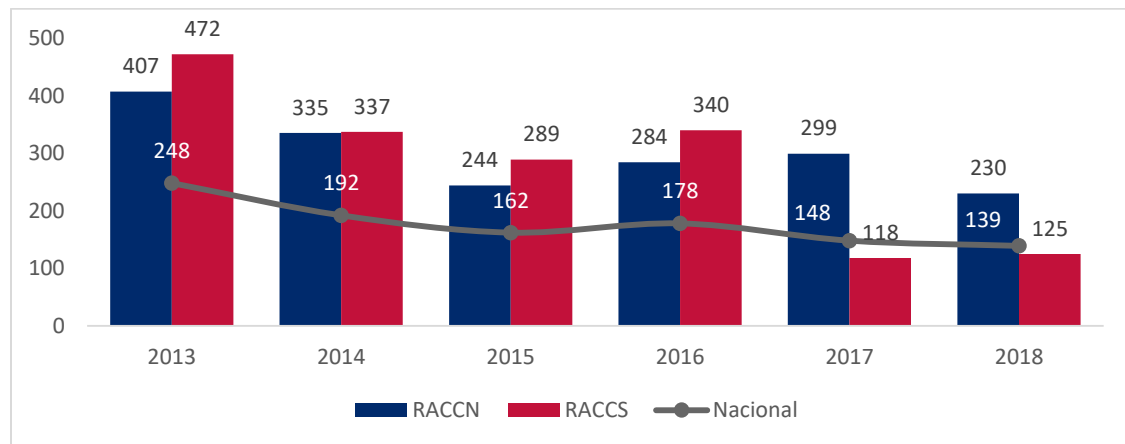
**Figure 13. Sex crimes per 100,000 inhabitants**



**Source:** Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2013-2018

Like homicides, sex crimes for both autonomous regions have maintained rates greater than that observed at the national level. However, the RACCS has experienced a 30% decrease and the RACCN a 22% decrease between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, rates in both regions fell; however, they continue to be higher than the national rate. The impact of sexual assaults usually falls on vulnerable populations (women, children and adolescents), is associated with patriarchal and sexist perceptions of a woman's body and is a type of violence that has important physical and psychological repercussions for the victims.

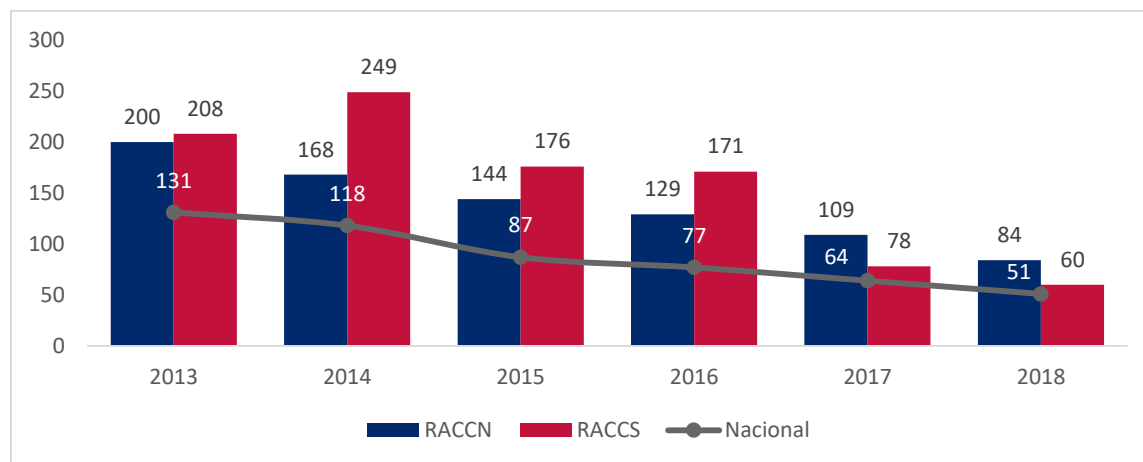
**Figure 14. Robbery of all kinds per 100,000 inhabitants**



Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2013-2018.

Between 2017 and 2018, robberies of all kinds show a cyclical trend in both regions. During this period robberies fell from 299 to 230 robberies per 100,000 inhabitants in the RACCN and from 118 to 125 in the RACCS. Although the number of robberies rose in the RACCS, this region does not reach the rates recorded nationally and in the RACCN, both characterized as having the highest levels of this crime. Injuries (Figure 15) continued to decrease in the autonomous regions as well as at the national level in both 2017 and 2018. However, the autonomous regions continue to present higher figures than those of the national level.

**Figure 15. Injuries per 100,000 inhabitants**



Source: Statistical Yearbook, National Police 2013-2018

#### IV. EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

The latest national studies on the educational situation have addressed achievements in investment in education (World Bank, 2016) and educational quality based on Nicaragua's performance in the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (*Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo*, TERCE) conducted by UNESCO (Huelva, Pacheco, & Toruño, 2017). The World Bank Study on public spending on education states that “the policies implemented since 2008 have contributed to better access and retention in basic education (grades 1-9), as well as increased educational attainment of the population overall. However, the completion rates for both primary and secondary schools remain quite low compared to other Central American countries” (World Bank, 2016, p11).

The study on the quality of education carried out by the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (*Fundación Nicaragüense para el Desarrollo Económico y Social*, FUNIDES) indicates that according to TERCE results, third and sixth grade Nicaraguan students rank below the Latin American average in reading and math. The results are also below the regional average in science (only applied to sixth grade students). Factors associated with these results include socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the families, the pedagogical approach and teaching practices in the classrooms, the availability of textbooks and educational infrastructure (Huelva, Pacheco, & Toruño, 2017, p.12); associating the diversity of these factors with academic achievement.

As documented in the second PROGRES report, the Caribbean Coast faces the following challenges: reduce illiteracy (11.4% in the Caribbean Coast, 6.26% at the national level)<sup>21</sup>, equate the average years of schooling in the region (6.7 years) with those registered at the national level (7.5years) among the population not in poverty<sup>22</sup>, limit the impact of poverty on access to educational opportunities, expand educational coverage/access in rural areas and strengthen attendance of children and adolescents to preschool, primary and secondary education levels<sup>23</sup>. According to EMNV 2014 data, 70.1% of children 3-5 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend preschool, as compared with 57.6% nationwide; 18% of those 6-11 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend primary school, as compared to 8% nationwide; and 28% of those 12-16 years old in the Caribbean Coast do not attend secondary school, as compared to 20.4% nationwide.

Together with the structural aspects presented above, the quality of education in the Caribbean Coast is another challenge that includes and is complemented by the (lack) of ethnic-cultural relevance of the current education system and the need for greater leadership of Autonomous institutions in the implementation of the Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) model.

Considering the context under which this report was prepared and limitations to access official data, the analysis of achievements in education (investment in education and literacy achievements) in the RACCN and RACCS has been carried out from secondary sources in both autonomous regions.

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<sup>21</sup> The data presented in this paragraph correspond to our own processes based on the Living Standard Measurement Survey 2014 (*Encuesta de Medición de Nivel de Vida*, EMNV 2014) database.

<sup>22</sup> The population in poverty on the Caribbean coast has an average of 4.3 years of schooling and those in extreme poverty, 2.7 years.

<sup>23</sup> According to EMNV 2014 data, non-attendance to preschool, primary and secondary school of children and adolescents of the corresponding ages is greater in the Caribbean coast than in other regions of the country (Pacific, Central) including the national level.

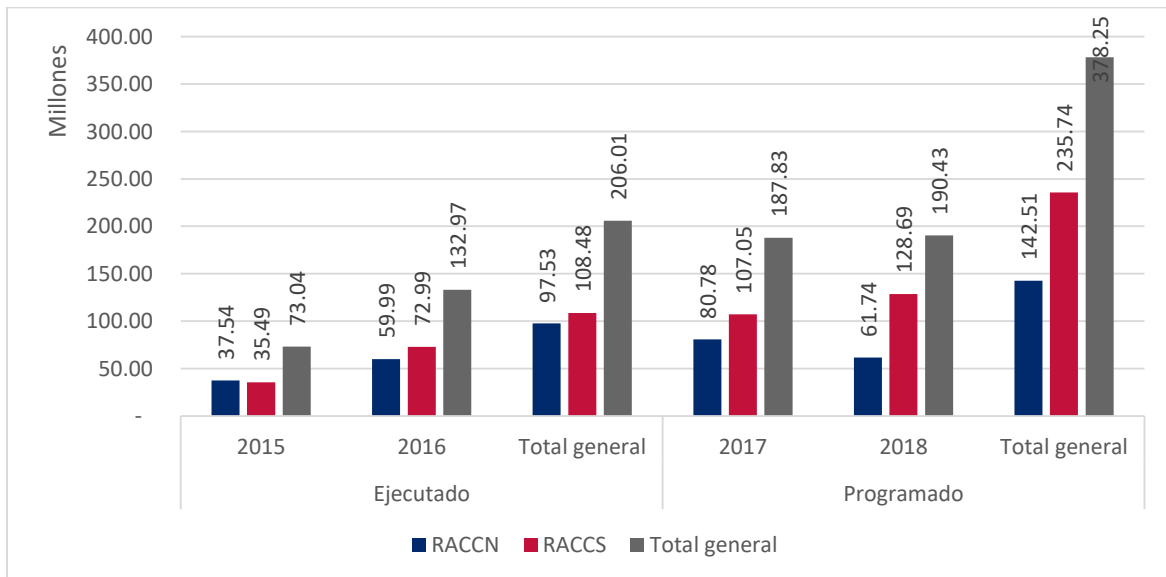
#### 4.1. Achievements in 2017-2018

##### *Investment in education in the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua 2015-2018*

Between 2015 and 2016, the public investment to the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua was C\$ 5,796.66 million (US\$192.9 million), divided between the RACCN (47%) and the RACCS (53%). These figures are collected through the National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*) and the municipal Annual Investment Plans, which until 2018 were published by the Transmuni web portal.

For 2017-2018, only consolidated budget figures in these autonomous regions of Nicaragua are available, totaling US \$378.25 million for the period.

**Figure 16. Public investment in the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua<sup>24</sup>**



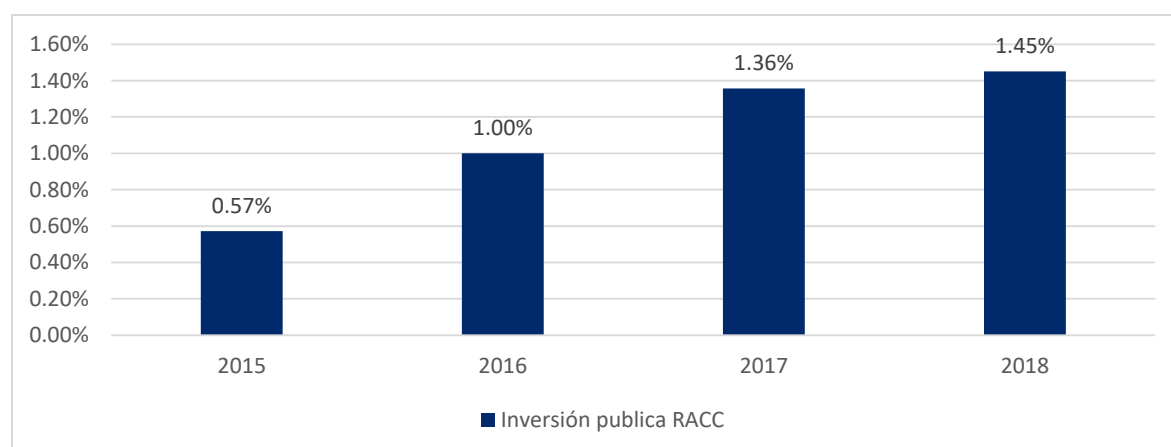
Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

According to the figures collected, public investment as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) has grown from 0.57% in 2015 to 1.45% as budgeted in 2018. This became evident in recent years, as significant resources have been allocated to road infrastructure and water and sanitation projects.

<sup>24</sup> Figures in millions of Córdobas.



**Figure 17. Public investment in the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua as % of GDP**



Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

### **Public investment in educational infrastructure**

Central government spending designated to the education sector of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua cannot be fully calculated due to missing data in the General Budget of the Republic (*Presupuesto General de la República, PGR*); however, this can be approximated based on public investment data, as detailed above.

To carry out this analysis, “investment” projects were separated into 35 categories, including “Education”. This data showed that during the 2015-2016 period, public investment in educational infrastructure was the fourth largest investment sector with a total of C\$388.23 million (US\$13.9 million) of which the RACCN received 67% and the RACCS, 33%. Investment in education is equivalent to 6.75% of the total public investments during the period.

**Table 3. Public investment in the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, by sector 2015-2016 (C\$, US\$)**

Strategic Sector	Millions of Córdobas			Millions of USD		
	2015	2016	Total	2015	2016	Total
Ground transportation	784.21	2,098.46	2,882.67	28.77	73.32	102.09
Water and sanitation	252.40	567.18	819.58	9.26	19.82	29.08
Institutional strengthening	205.94	249.95	455.89	7.55	8.73	16.29
Education	191.50	196.72	388.23	7.03	6.87	13.90
Health	160.97	178.53	339.50	5.91	6.24	12.14
Justice system	77.47	180.24	257.70	2.84	6.30	9.14
Sports	76.83	91.72	168.55	2.82	3.20	6.02
Housing	47.19	31.67	78.86	1.73	1.11	2.84
Energy	3.67	68.16	71.83	0.13	2.38	2.52
Telecommunications	70.16	0.90	71.06	2.57	0.03	2.61
Recreation	21.65	30.64	52.29	0.79	1.07	1.86
Family, Children, Youth and Women	18.71	27.11	45.83	0.69	0.95	1.63
Environment	18.93	25.28	44.21	0.69	0.88	1.58
Risk management	23.41	11.99	35.40	0.86	0.42	1.28

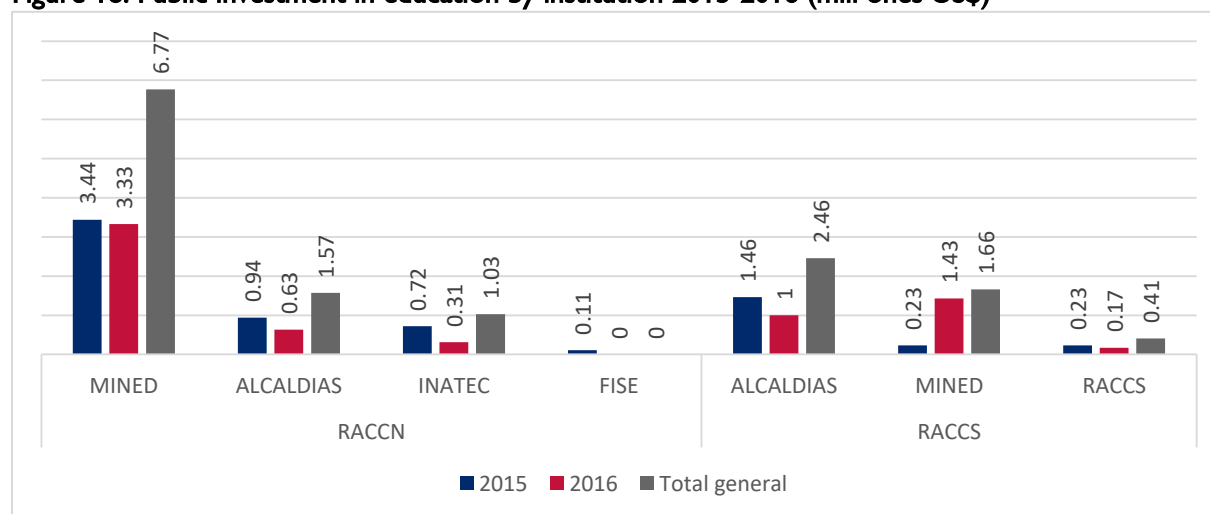
Strategic Sector	Millions of Córdoba			Millions of USD		
	2015	2016	Total	2015	2016	Total
Others	2.70	13.00	15.70	0.10	0.45	0.55
Sewer and storm drain	8.42	6.02	14.44	0.31	0.21	0.52
Culture	6.77	7.20	13.97	0.25	0.25	0.50
Community coexistence	6.78	5.68	12.46	0.25	0.20	0.45
Religion	4.30	5.40	9.70	0.16	0.19	0.35
Aquatic transport	4.16	2.84	6.99	0.15	0.10	0.25
Forestry	1.17	3.36	4.54	0.04	0.12	0.16
Tourism	1.39	2.61	3.99	0.05	0.09	0.14
Agriculture	1.72	0.58	2.30	0.06	0.02	0.08
Fishing	0.36	0.47	0.83	0.01	0.02	0.03
Agroforestry	0.13	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,990.94</b>	<b>3,805.72</b>	<b>5,796.66</b>	<b>73.04</b>	<b>132.97</b>	<b>206.01</b>

Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

Between 2015 and 2016, investment in education decreased by 2.15% (16.4% reduction in RACCN and 35.8% increase in RACCS).

The implementing institutions included the Ministry of Education (MINED) with US\$8.4 million, followed by municipalities with US\$4.03 million and the National Technological Institute (*Instituto Nacional Tecnológico, INATEC*) with US\$1.03 million. Figure 18 shows the distribution by region. It is worth noting that in the RACCS, the municipalities invested the most in education with US\$2.46 million during the period.

Figure 18. Public investment in education by institution 2015-2016 (mill ones US\$)



Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

As previously mentioned, an analysis of implemented funds cannot be performed with the official data for the 2017-2018 period because neither the Transmuni website, nor the National Investment System published data by department and municipality for this period, but rather only the amount budgeted. In these two years a total of C\$ 391.43 million, or US\$ 12.79 million were allocated. In Córdoba, an

increase of 0.8% is observed, but in dollars, a reduction of 7.9% is observed compared to the 2015-2016 period.

During this period, the investment in the education sector decreases with respect to 2015-2016, from 6.75% to 3.36% for 2017-2018.

**Table 4. Budgeted investment for the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua 2017-2018 (C\$, US\$)**

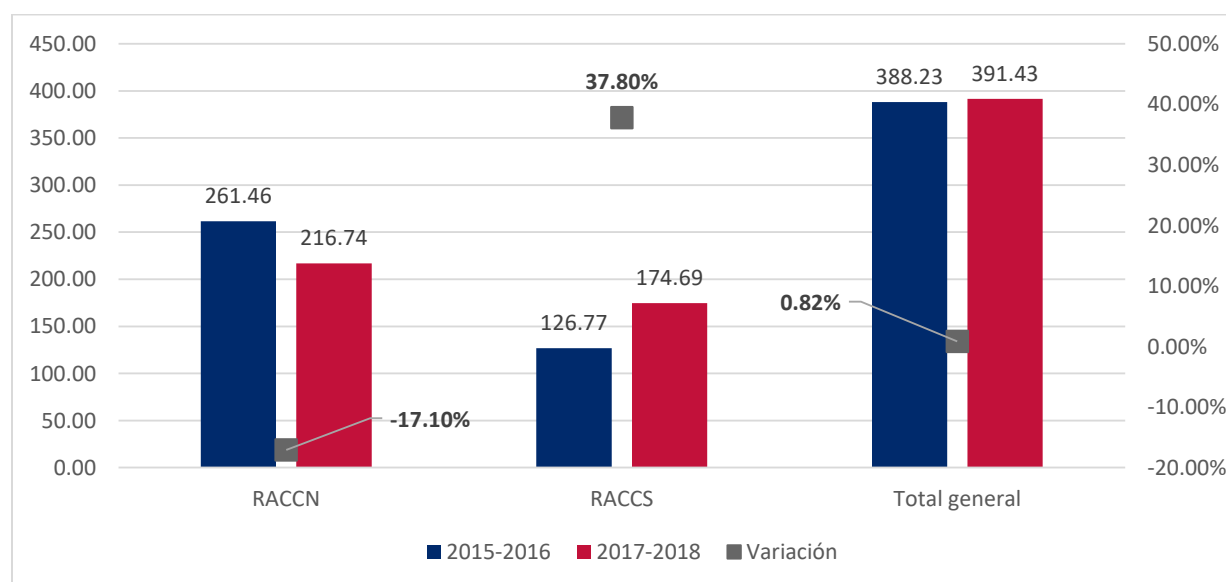
Sector	Millions of Córdoba			Millions of Dollars		
	Budget			Budget		
	2017	2018	Total	2017	2018	Total
Ground transportation	3,170.85	191.40	3,362.25	105.52	6.07	111.59
Roads, bridges, sewers		2,725.58	2,725.58	0.00	86.39	86.39
Water and sanitation	663.40	1,294.41	1,957.81	22.08	41.03	63.10
Institutional strengthening	226.99	318.13	545.13	7.55	10.08	17.64
Health	362.63	69.88	432.51	12.07	2.21	14.28
Education	245.24	146.19	391.43	8.16	4.63	12.79
Household and public energy		352.34	352.34	0.00	11.17	11.17
Streets, sidewalks and platforms		329.58	329.58	0.00	10.45	10.45
Energy	324.16		324.16	10.79	0.00	10.79
Justice system	179.22	47.05	226.27	5.96	1.49	7.46
Culture and sports		150.58	150.58	0.00	4.77	4.77
Recreation	106.69	22.50	129.19	3.55	0.71	4.26
Sports	109.71		109.71	3.65	0.00	3.65
Housing	41.68	46.27	87.96	1.39	1.47	2.85
Sewer and storm drain	13.45	51.72	65.17	0.45	1.64	2.09
Parks, squares and adornment		63.13	63.13	0.00	2.00	2.00
Risk management	55.03		55.03	1.83	0.00	1.83
Payment of debts		51.14	51.14	0.00	1.62	1.62
Family, Children, Youth and Women	49.88		49.88	1.66	0.00	1.66
Others	15.00	34.48	49.48	0.50	1.09	1.59
Environment	32.79	14.47	47.26	1.09	0.46	1.55
Attention to vulnerable groups		36.83	36.83	0.00	1.17	1.17
Economic development		30.51	30.51	0.00	0.97	0.97
Community coexistence	17.73	10.02	27.76	0.59	0.32	0.91
Aquatic transport	6.58	4.00	10.58	0.22	0.13	0.35
Storm drain		8.72	8.72	0.00	0.28	0.28
Religion	6.50		6.50	0.22	0.00	0.22
Culture	6.21		6.21	0.21	0.00	0.21
Fishing	1.06	4.18	5.24	0.04	0.13	0.17
Citizen participation		4.24	4.24	0.00	0.13	0.13
Tourism	3.55		3.55	0.12	0.00	0.12
Forestry	3.37		3.37	0.11	0.00	0.11

Sector	Millions of Córdoba			Millions of Dollars		
	2017	2018	Total	2017	2018	Total
Agriculture	1.58	0.35	1.93	0.05	0.01	0.06
Telecommunications	0.66		0.66	0.02	0.00	0.02
Food security		0.30	0.30	0.00	0.01	0.01
Air transport	0.19		0.19	0.01	0.00	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,644.15</b>	<b>6,008.03</b>	<b>11,652.17</b>	<b>187.83</b>	<b>190.43</b>	<b>378.25</b>

Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

Based on available data and comparing both periods, the RACCN received a 17% reduction while the RACCS received a 37.8% increase.

Figure 19. Investment for the Caribbean Coast Regions of Nicaragua 2015-2016 vs 2017-2018<sup>25</sup>

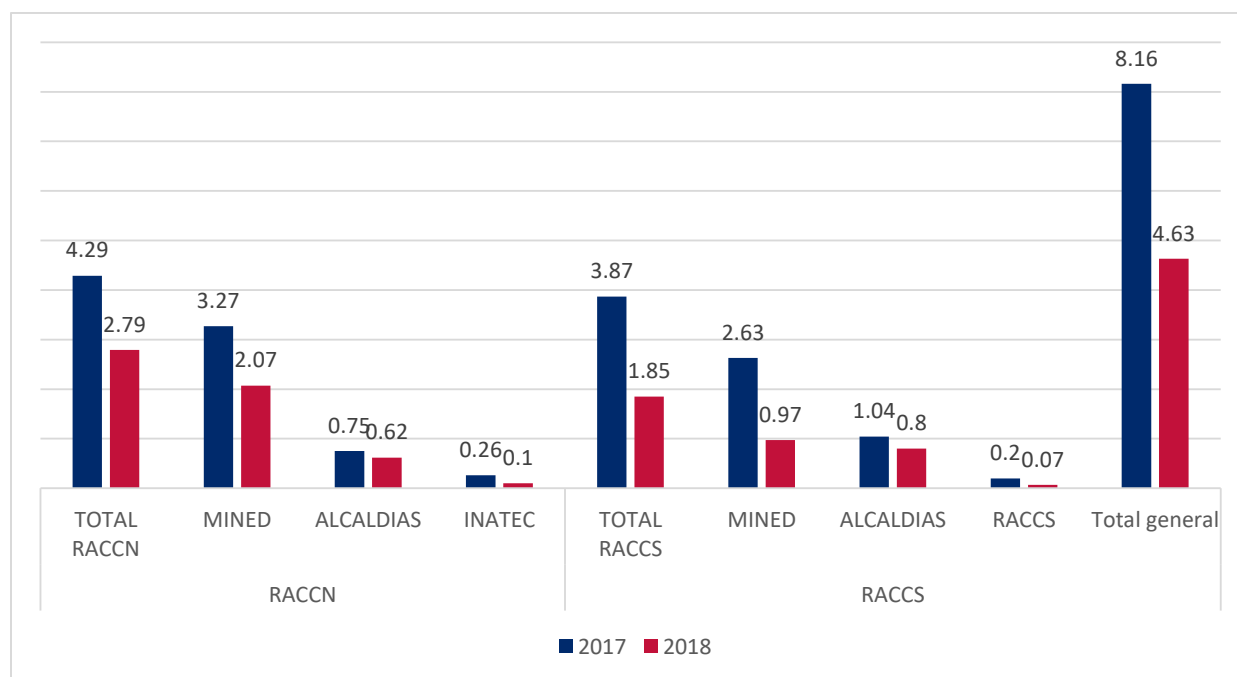


Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

Unlike the 2015-2016 period, in 2017-2018, planned investment by MINED increased by US\$0.5 million to US\$8.9 million. Meanwhile, local governments and INATEC reduced their investment to US\$3.2 and US\$0.3 million, respectively. It should be noted that for the 2017-2018 period, MINED leads investment in both the RACCN and the RACCS.

<sup>25</sup> Figures in millions of Córdoba and percentages

Figure 20. Investment in Caribbean Coast by Institution 2017-2018 (million US\$)



Source: National Public Investment System (*Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública, SNIP*)

### Literacy Improvement

CARS actions and results achieved through can be used to approximate literacy achievements in primary education. In 2017, CARS carried out an EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) baseline to determine basic fluency and reading comprehension skills in a sample of 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students in primary education schools served by the CARS Project in the RACCS and the RACCN, as well as the effect of associated factors on reading performance.

The baseline study included 2,104 students from 57 urban and rural schools, participating in *Espacios para Crecer* (Spaces to Grow, EpC) and *Aprendo, Practico, Aplico* (I learn, I Practice, I Apply: the formal active teaching methodology for primary schools), in 7 municipalities of the RACCS and the RACCN (Bluefields, Corn Island, Kukra Hill, Laguna de Perlas, Prinzapolka, Puerto Cabezas and Waspam). Of the students who participated in this evaluation: 20% were repeating grade; 15% of the participants were from the non-formal EpC<sup>26</sup> program, the remaining 85% are from the formal program; 51.9% of the students were girls; 64% were evaluated in Spanish and 36% in Miskitu; and 65% of the participants came from rural schools.

<sup>26</sup> In the educational field, CARS implements two programs to improve the quality of reading: (i) the formal education program encompasses students from the third level of preschool through third grade of primary school, and focuses on teaching support in the classroom; (ii) the non-formal program is developed through the EpCs, which represent an extracurricular space prioritizing students with greater learning difficulties, at a time alternate to that of the elementary school. The EpC is developed by a facilitator (who may or may not be a teacher), with a duration of 3 hours.

**Table 5. EGRA: Overall results by language and grade**

Language and Grade	Oral Comprehension	Letter Recognition	Phonetic awareness	Simple Words	Made up words	Reading Fluency	Reading Comprehension
<b>Spanish</b>							
First Grade	38.6%	19.41	40.4%	11.11	8.36	18.38	28.5%
Second Grade	46.5%	37.08	49.5%	24.45	20.42	44.88	44.1%
Third Grade	46.4%	47.16	51.6%	30.79	28.63	65.82	51.0%
<b>Average Spanish</b>	<b>43.8%</b>	<b>34.79</b>	<b>47.2%</b>	<b>22.26</b>	<b>19.34</b>	<b>44.37</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
<b>Miskitu</b>							
First Grade	27.34%	13.91	5.02%	1.74	1.38	3.29	18.42%
Second Grade	31.64%	26.29	7.27%	6.66	5.04	8.64	19.21%
Third Grade	39.24%	45.77	12.07%	22.01	17.31	24.79	39.29%
<b>Average Miskitu</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>28.01</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>9.72</b>	<b>7.58</b>	<b>13.73</b>	<b>31.1%</b>

Source: EGRA Baseline Report 2017 RACCN and RACCS (Núñez, 2019)

A synthesis of the results shows that:

- When comparing the results by sex, girls obtained better performance in the recognition of initial sounds, familiar words, invented words, fluency and comprehension sections, while the boys had better performance in oral comprehension and recognition of letter names. However, the differences are not significant in any section.
- In Spanish, students correctly read (reading fluency) on average 18, 45 and 65 words per minute for first, second and third grades, respectively. In Miskitu, students read on average, 3, 8 and 24 words per minute. The study showed that students who participate in the non-formal program (EpC) have a 12% greater reading fluency in Spanish and 18% greater in Miskitu than those in the formal program (that is, they read 12% more correct words per minute in Spanish and 18% more in Miskitu). The results show that, overall, only 29.7% of students read fluently in Spanish according to international reading standards<sup>27</sup>, while 34% do so in Miskitu according to the standards developed by DevTech for this language. The regional analysis shows that RACCN students have greater learning difficulties than those of the RACCS. Results for reading fluency in Spanish show that 33% of RACCS students read fluently, while only 23% do so in RACCN. Similarly, 48% of RACCS students are at high risk, while in the RACCN this data rises to 64%.
- In reading comprehension, Spanish-speaking students reached a level of 13%, 35% and 47% for grades 1, 2 and 3, respectively, for an overall reading comprehension average of 32%. The students evaluated in Miskitu, obtained a level of 2%, 5% and 22% for grades 1, 2 and 3, respectively, for an overall reading comprehension of 11%. Regardless of region, language and sex, these results indicate that, even in third grade, students understand less than half of what they read. In the case of Miskitu, the overall average of reading comprehension indicates that these students only understand one tenth – part of what they read, which prevents them from retaining any type of learning.

<sup>27</sup> CARS uses the *Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito de la Lectura* (Dynamic Indicators of Reading Success, IDEL) to assess early literacy skills in Spanish by establishing benchmarks on the number of words a student should read per grade (at the beginning, middle and end of grade). These benchmarks help classify reading between fluid, low risk, and high risk.

- The study includes an analysis of factors associated with reading: grade of the student, grade repetition, school absence, receives help with homework at home, read to at home, evaluated in mother tongue, or evaluated in Miskitu. In order of “impact” on reading fluency, the study found that the variables that most influence reading improvement are: grade of the student (fluency increase of 19 words for each grade), evaluation in mother tongue (8) and help at home (3). On the other hand, the most negative variables include learning in Miskitu (reduction of 35 words per minute in fluency), regular absence (reduction of 7 words) and repeated grade (reduction of 4 words). It was found that the only variable that was not statistically significant was whether the student was read to at home, having an opposite effect to that expected.
- In order of priority, the most difficult sections were sound recognition, reading invented words and reading simple words. These sections are linked to the abilities of (i) phonological awareness, (ii) vocabulary and development of automatisms derived from a more enriched vocabulary, and (iii) decoding. Therefore, it is recommended that CARS provide systematic and frequent (monthly) follow-up to primary school teachers in the implementation of work strategies and methodologies that strengthen these skills. As seen in the first grade results, students have significant weaknesses in areas that should be developed and strengthened from preschool.

In terms of recommendations, the baseline report states that, in the short term, the MINED technical team must identify the most appropriate improvement strategies for the region; provide training for teachers in the *Fónico, Analítico, Sintético* (Phonetic, Analytic, Synthetic, FAS)<sup>28</sup> method and reactivate the Regional Board of Education as a space to address educational challenges with the competent authorities. In the long term, it is necessary to update and contextualize the curriculum, both for primary school teacher training and for the transition from preschool to primary school; continue the permanent and quality training of teachers; and increase investment in Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE), for which it is necessary to review the profile of current teachers and relocate them, update and contextualize the IBE curriculum and make it an integral part of teacher training for the region.

#### 4.2. Factors that limit the quality of education in the RACCS

The report on educational quality prepared by FUNIDES (Huelva et al., 2017) from the TERCE database, shows that Nicaraguan test results were low in relation to other countries. It also indicates that belonging to a minority ethnic group is associated with a lower academic achievement in all tests, except science, with the greatest effect observed in reading for sixth graders.

Regarding this variable, the report presents:

*Belonging to a minority ethnic group is associated with a lower academic achievement in all tests (...). In reading tests for third grade and math for sixth grade, the average difference between students who belong to a minority ethnic group compared to those who do not, is around 40 points. However, in math tests for third grade the average difference reaches 75 points and in reading for sixth grade students, those who belonged to a minority ethnicity obtained 160 points less than other students (Huelva et al., 2017, p. 38).*

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<sup>28</sup> The FAS method encourages the study of speech sounds and their correspondence with letters. The method is based on the pedagogical process that must be conceived as an active and dynamic process, which guarantees a significant exchange between students and teachers, and an optimal learning by students from the first grade.

These findings, together with the importance of instruction in mother tongue as shown in the EGRA report (Núñez, 2019), limitations in coverage, quality of educational infrastructure, teacher retention and monitoring; lead one to consider the structural nature of the factors that obstruct the opportunities to improve the quality of education in the RACCS; one of them being the lack of relevance.

Therefore, the absence of systematic strategies – such as those used by CARS – affects the limited educational quality of indigenous children, adolescents, Afro-descendants and mestizos of the Caribbean Coast.

#### **4.3. The Regional Autonomous Educational System (SEAR) in the RACCS – regression or stagnation?**

The educational progress report for the RACCS prepared jointly by IBIS and EDUQUEMOS (2015) presented the following SEAR limitations:

- *Stagnation in the coverage of the IBE program*
- *Little availability of human, material and financial resources in the Regional Secretary of Education*
- *Weakening of the curricular reform processes, institutional coordination and programmatic linkages, to update and strengthen IBE. This is presented as the main consequence of the SEAR limitations.*
- *Some lack of knowledge of SEAR in several municipalities and social sectors that do not participate in the educational processes.*
- *Lack of understanding of SEAR by some MINED officials at the central level*
- *Some sectors consider that regional authorities are not interested in the regionalization of education and that the double institutional leadership (Regional Secretary of Education – MINED Delegation) calls into question the regional educational autonomy.*
- *There is a need for more equitable participation of students, parents and the community in the implementation of SEAR.*
- *Weakening of cultural identity, particularly in Creole teachers and students, who believe they should be taught in Standard English, disregarding the importance of their mother tongue to strengthen their identity. (IBIS-Denmark & EDUQUEMOS, 2015, p.10)*

The assessments of the various actors consulted and linked to the education system in the region coincide with the findings cited above. They also indicated that the IEB program is in “abandonment”, without qualified technicians and without the investment of resources for teacher training, curricular updating, the generation of materials and accompaniment to the educational centers that implement it. From an institutional perspective, those consulted agree on the provision of legal, conceptual and action tools (such as the septuagenal plan). However, they claim there is an absence of leadership in educational management at the regional level regarding the SEAR implementation.

This absence has led to the implementation of national educational policies and guidelines that cover the scope and analyze variables on the educational situation at the regional level. This further limits the spaces and processes for dialogue and consensus necessary to build the leadership of autonomous



institutions, which also lack an effective relationship between the Regional Secretary of Education and the Education Commission of the Regional Council.

Based on the above, during the 2017-2018 period it has not been possible to identify actions aimed at improving the structural factors that limit SEAR implementation.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides key elements resulting from the data and analysis presented in the previous sections that may be of interest to CARS and USAID.

### 5.1. Conclusions

#### *Citizen security, risks, social fragmentation and gender-based violence*

The Caribbean Coast (particularly the RACCN and RACCS) is at high risk given the demographic crime indices and criminal actions from the justice system regarding crimes such as homicide, sex crimes, injuries and all kinds of robbery. These indicators, despite experiencing some fluctuations in recent years, remain above the national average, which may provide evidence of social fragmentation and lack of respect for life and bodily integrity.

Drug use, domestic violence – specifically toward women – as well as alcohol use are some of the main problems perceived by the population. They affect vulnerable populations such as children, adolescents, youth and women.

For women, the fight against GBV has experienced setbacks in attention to victims and there is a lack of specialized support mechanisms required for the different manifestations of GBV. The justice system as a whole is limited in its ability to protect the lives of women, facilitate expedited and relevant access to justice and affectively attend to victims.

Despite the implementation of projects focused on violence prevention (both at the communication level and attention to youth at risk or already in conflict with the law), in 2017-2018 there are no substantial advances in citizen security indicators, especially in serious crimes such as homicides, sex crimes, injuries and robberies. With regard to attention to victims of GBV, the deficiencies in the State's response are negatively complemented by the lack of the material, infrastructure and financial means by civil society organizations, which makes it difficult to provide follow up to women who are victims of violence; This exacerbates the security situation in the region, especially for women.

In terms of security, 2018 represents a turning point in the homicide rate at the national level, increasing from 7 to 11 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, which reflects a setback in terms of perceptions of insecurity, police institutions and their leaders. Recovering institutional trust represents a medium and long-term challenge.

#### *Education, coverage, quality and relevance as challenges*

It is difficult to determine the progress made in education in 2017-2018 given the lack of data and/or the dispersion or lack of precision of the sources. This limits assessing advances in enrollment and retention by educational level, as well as other key indicators. However, based on the data collected, the need for the education system to expand infrastructure investment in schools is evident. In addition, key actors consulted, expressed coverage in rural areas, monitoring and continued teacher training as areas in which no substantial progress has been made.

During the reported period, actions by CARS and other USAID-funded projects have contributed to the improvement in access, quality and generation of educational opportunities in preschool, primary, secondary and technical/vocational education to children, adolescents and young people. Literacy achievements highlighted in the EGRA carried out by CARS in 2017, show the importance of the

development of strategies aimed at strengthening the quality and relevance of primary education, as well as advances in reading fluency and comprehension in first and third grade boys and girls.

Although advances have been made during this period in investment in educational infrastructure, government programs (i.e. school snacks) and teacher support/training, important limitations by the Ministry of Education and the Secretary of Education remain in the implementation of strategies that contribute to educational quality, its relevance and the attention to children, adolescents and young people in vulnerable situations.

The prevalence of structural factors that impede SEAR implementation, such as the poor leadership of regional institutions, limit the possibility of developing or implementing actions to reverse the dismantling of the IBE model and curricular progress achieved between 1996-2006. Therefore, the scenario is unfavorable and there is no progress.

## 5.2. Recommendations

### *Knowledge management and dialogue for citizen security*

At the regional level, it is difficult to identify spaces to analyze citizen security. Therefore, the next USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) can make a strategic contribution by promoting regional meetings or events that focus on the analysis of the security situation and the identification of key actions that are committed to: 1) greater synergy and cooperation among ongoing initiatives; 2) intersectoral and multilevel efforts linking community leadership, central, regional and municipal level institutions, as well as civil society organizations; 3) appropriation of regional universities as institutions with social legitimacy that can facilitate the continuity of spaces for dialogue and the monitoring of strategies.

The development of systematic meetings to facilitate cooperation can generate the necessary conditions to design regional strategies that address the levels of insecurity and the factors that put the population of the Caribbean coast at risk in the face of complex situations such as drug trafficking, drug addiction and human trafficking.

### *Interventions and financing for attention to victims of gender-based violence*

The absence of actions that directly address GBV and contribute – from a victim-centered approach – to limiting the negative impact of the lack of capacities of State institutions, can be addressed through the implementation of strategic work focused on this purpose and integrated into the next USAID CDCS.

The availability of resources in this area could prioritize: 1) psychological and legal assistance/support to victims (women, children, adolescents); 2) the promotion of economic alternatives (business ventures) for female victims of violence; and 3) a community approach to factors that generate violence (*machismo*) through the promotion of new masculinities, as initial actions of a commitment that requires a medium-term vision to generate change.

### *Education*

The education challenges are structural and in the case of SEAR, have important political implications. Therefore, the actions proposed below are within the reach of CARS/USAID and the organizations with which it works.

*Knowledge management on good practices for educational quality in intercultural contexts*

Although the impact on educational quality depends on different factors, CARS can be used to position successful experiences in promoting educational quality in intercultural contexts at national and international levels. These experiences can be shared through regional or municipal forums to generate dialogue on the particular importance of IBE and SEAR. This type of action can contribute to socially positioning the relevance of an educational system that contributes to strengthening the ethnic-cultural identity of indigenous, Afro-descendant and mestizo children and adolescents in the Caribbean Coast.

*Promote political-intersectoral dialogue*

In association with community universities (BICU and URACCAN) the promotion of high-level meetings between educational authorities and civil society organizations are recommended, to update the progress in SEAR implementation, the necessary actions for this to be effective and the commitments that different actors can assume – from an intersectoral and co-responsibility perspective – to address the structural factors that prevent the regional education system from materializing.

*Coordination between USAID initiatives for sustainable results*

The proximity of the closing dates of different USAID projects (EFS and CARS) should be an opportunity for the participatory and intersectoral design of sustainable strategies for the results achieved. The cooperation between USAID funded projects is key to this purpose.

Part of the sustainability strategy may be the identification of projects to provide continuity to the impacts achieved, in order to propose actions that would allow scale-up in scope, focus and achievements; such as programs focused on youth entrepreneurship or financing for small businesses that have a direct link to Education for Success (EFS).

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