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**REPORT ON PROGRAMMED ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE
PROJECT ON MIGRATION AND TRENDS IN REMITTANCES IN THE
CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES ***

* Report prepared by the National Institute of Statistics of Honduras.

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1. Background

As decided at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile, from 25 to 27 July 2007, the National Institute of Statistics of Honduras (INE), which is the coordinator for the Working Group on Migration and Trends in Remittances in the Member Countries of the Conference, presents herein a status report on the corresponding project.¹

As the Conference is aware, the project emerged as an initiative of the Central American countries within the framework of the Regional Public Goods Initiative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Interest in the issue has been increasing steadily; currently, IDB is providing assistance to national statistical offices in Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama for the incorporation of harmonized modules for measurement of migration and international remittances. Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay have also expressed an interest in working on the issue.

(a) The modules

In the third quarter of 2006, an initial version of the thematic content and questionnaire of the following modules was presented:

- International immigration
- Return migration
- International emigration
- Receipt of remittances
- Sending of remittances

This proposal was analysed with the national statistical offices, central banks, migration departments, ministries of foreign affairs and within the framework of focal groups organized in each of the countries participating in the project.

The National Institute of Statistics of Honduras received the first proposal, made the necessary adjustments and implemented it in its September 2006 income survey. A new version of the questionnaire has now been prepared on the basis of: the Honduran experience; the observations and recommendations made by other countries that receive IDB assistance, by the office of the International Organization for Migration (OIM) in Costa Rica and by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico; and the results of interviews held with the local bodies listed in the preceding paragraph. This new version includes fewer questions and is geared to determining the socio-economic profiles of migrants and the main characteristics of the remittances. This second harmonized version has already been applied by four countries.

¹ This document was prepared on the basis of the report presented by Alberto Padilla Trejo, Consultant at the Inter-American Development Bank.

The module for international immigration encompasses a set of questions which the national statistical offices regularly include in their household surveys, so that it was only necessary to add a few questions. The other modules are special sections that take up no more than one page, depending on the format used for the questionnaires.

(b) Status report on the Project on Migration and Trends in Remittances in Central American Countries

At the date of writing —late October 2008— Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua had already completed their household surveys, which included at least one of the modules relating to migration and remittances. In the case of Nicaragua, the modules had been incorporated into two surveys. El Salvador and the Dominican Republic were engaged in the relevant field work, while Guatemala and Panama had indicated their intention of applying some of the modules in 2008.

In four of the five countries that had used or were using the migration and remittances modules, the latter were incorporated into the employment and income surveys.² The national statistical office of the Dominican Republic has incorporated them into its multiple-purpose survey, which also includes issues of access to information technologies, monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and public safety.

Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic had considered the widest range of modules, as they were studying the issues of immigration, emigration, and the receipt and sending of remittances. Honduras was the only country that included the subject of return migration, in addition to international immigration, emigration and the receipt of remittances. El Salvador and Nicaragua incorporated the issues of emigration and receipt of remittances, while Guatemala and Panama in principle showed interest in these same issues.

(c) Situation by country

Costa Rica

Modules used: international immigration, international emigration, sending and receipt of remittances, harmonized version.

Period of implementation: July 2007.

Status: the data are currently being refined. Preparation of the harmonized tabulations is scheduled to be completed in November 2007. The National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) has entered into an agreement with a local institution for the analysis of the results.

Requirements: assistance in refining data and establishing harmonized indicators and tabulations, which will be done in November 2007.

² The consultant considers that the most appropriate vehicle for application of the migration and remittances modules is an employment and income survey, since this survey provides economic information for measuring the impact of remittances on living conditions, and elaborating typologies of households that have family members abroad.

El Salvador

Modules used: international emigration and receipt of remittances, harmonized version.

Period of implementation: July to December 2007. Between January and June 2007, the Department of Statistics and Censuses (DIGESTYC) used the modules that it had applied in previous years.

Status: the field work is well under way; in October, the work of digitization was begun. The internal consistency of data is guaranteed thanks to the use of relevant criteria. The plan is to have a standardized database by April 2008.

Guatemala

Status: there is a master questionnaire for the modules for international emigration and receipt of remittances, as well as for the corresponding manual for survey takers. The date of implementation of the modules will depend on the authorities that take over the administration of the country in January 2008.

Requirements: once the National Institute of Statistics (INE) has defined the date of implementation of the modules, assistance will be required for the consistency and refinement of the data, the preparation of harmonized indicators and tabulations and the writing up of an executive report on the results.

Honduras

Modules used: international immigration and return migration, emigration and receipt of remittances, first version. The National Institute of Statistics has also incorporated a series of questions on aspects of emigration that it considers important.

Period of implementation: September 2006.

Status: the results have been published with tabulations based on the institute's criteria for producing reports. There are also tabulations consistent with the harmonized proposal, which require some adjustments. The National Institute of Statistics continues to apply some questions on emigration and remittances.

Requirements: the application of the harmonized modules must be considered in some of the rounds of surveys for the year no later than 2009, in order to prepare harmonized indicators and tabulations. To date, assistance is required for the preparation of a report with harmonized indicators and tabulations. If the harmonized modules are applied, it will be necessary to seek assistance for training, consistency and refinement of data, preparation of tabulations and writing up of a report on the results obtained.

Nicaragua

Modules used: emigration and receipt of remittances, harmonized version.

Period of implementation: November 2006 and July 2007.

Status: the 2006 survey is in the database; the 2007 survey is in the data refinement phase.

Requirements: assistance for data refinement and preparation of reports.

Panama

Status: there is a master questionnaire that has been adapted and could be expanded in line with any requests received by the Statistics and Census Office (DEC) from government agencies in the country. Two surveys are conducted per year and it has not yet been decided which will be chosen for implementing the modules.

Requirements: once the institution has decided on the date for application of the modules, assistance will be needed in training, consistency and data refinement, preparation of harmonized indicators and tabulations and the writing up of an executive report on the results obtained.

Dominican Republic

Modules used: immigration, emigration, sending and receipt of remittances.

Period of implementation: from September to November 2007: field work.

Status: the refined data are expected to be ready by mid-December 2007 and a final report will be presented with the results in February 2008.

Requirements: assistance with data refinement and preparation of harmonized indicators and tabulations and the writing-up of the final report.

(d) Future requirements

Further assistance will be needed with data refinement, preparation of harmonized indicators and tabulations and writing-up of executive reports. It is necessary to produce a regional comparative report to analyse the statistical data of countries that have completed their surveys in 2007.

The information collected using the modules on remittances must be taken into account in order to determine the total income of households; this has not yet been done by the national statistical offices that have applied modules in their surveys. One problem in this respect is that the surveys are considered basically to cover a three-month period, while the remittance models are considered over a 12-month period. The latter period is in keeping with the need to determine how these remittances are used, thereby eliminating the effect of seasonal variations in expenditure.

Statistics from records kept by national immigration departments need to be improved in order to have comparable information that can be produced on a continuous basis.

The central banks will also need assistance in order to improve their information collection methods and use correctly the data collected in the remittance modules under the IDB programme.