Thirty-sixth session
5-30 June 1989, New York
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND
PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Recommendation by the Executive Director
Assistance to the Government of Nicaragua
Support for a comprehensive population programme

Proposed UNFPA assistance: $12.2 million, of which $5.9 million is to be committed from UNFPA’s regular resources. If UNFPA’s funding situation permits, the balance of up to $6.3 million may be provided by UNFPA. If, and to the extent, this is not the case, UNFPA would seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources.

Estimated value of the Government’s contribution: To be determined

Duration: Four years

Estimated starting date: January 1989

Executing Agencies: Government of Nicaragua
International Labour Organisation (ILO)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
World Health Organization/Pan America Health Organization (WHO/PAHO)

Government co-ordinating agency: Ministry of Planning
## NICARAGUA

### Demographic facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Total (000)</th>
<th>Population density (/sq. km.)</th>
<th>25</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total..................</td>
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<tr>
<td>Males..................</td>
<td>Population increase</td>
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<td>Females...............</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Net migration</td>
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<td>Rural..................</td>
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<td>Growth rate (%)</td>
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<td>Median age (years).....</td>
<td>Life expectancy at birth (years)</td>
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<td>Dependency ratios: total</td>
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<td>(/100) Aged 0-14.......</td>
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<td>Aged 65+...............</td>
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<td>Agricultural population density (/hectare of arable land)</td>
<td>GNP per capita</td>
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I. SUMMARY

1. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) proposes to support a comprehensive population programme in the amount of $12.2 million, of which $5.9 million is to be committed from UNFPA's regular resources, over a four-year period, starting January 1989, to assist the Government of Nicaragua in achieving its population and development objectives. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, the balance of up to $6.3 million may be provided by UNFPA. If and to the extent this is not the case, UNFPA would seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources. This programme is designed to complement and build upon the nearly $6.5 million of assistance that has been provided through UNFPA and multi-bilateral arrangements from 1980 to 1987.

2. The proposed programme would assist the Government of Nicaragua to strengthen the National Institute of Statistics and Census to enable it to conduct a population census in the 1990s; to create a National Population Commission for the formulation of a population policy and the co-ordination of all population activities, to include a sub-committee for the formulation and implementation of a national sex education programme; to support the Ministry of Health in improving the quality and coverage of maternal and child health and family planning (MCH/FP) services; to continue support for activities in the area of population education and in the development of a system for monitoring and evaluating population activities.

3. All projects under the proposed programme, as in all UNFPA-assisted programmes, will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and objectives of the World Population Plan of Action; that is, that population policies should be consistent with internationally and nationally recognized human rights of individual freedom, justice and the survival of national, regional and minority groups (para. 14 (d)); that respect for human life is basic to all human societies (para. 14 (c)); and that all couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so (para. 14 (f)).

II. BACKGROUND

4. The Republic of Nicaragua is situated in the Central American isthmus between Honduras and Costa Rica, bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean Sea to the east. Its population is estimated at 3.6 million, of which 1.2 million are children nine years of age or younger and 700,000 are adolescents between 10 and 14 years. Together these two groups constitute 46 per cent of the total population. Life expectancy is 59 years, and the annual population growth rate is 3.3 per cent. The total fertility rate is estimated at 5.5 children per woman (1985-1990), and 21 per cent of all births are to women aged 19 years or under.

5. The Nicaraguan population began to grow at an accelerated rate during the 1950s. This growth was primarily the result of a reduction in mortality rates...
and a persistence of high levels of fertility. Until 1970, the total fertility rate was 7 children per woman of reproductive age. At the beginning of the 1980s, the rate was estimated at 6 children per woman, and it is currently assessed at 5.5 children per woman. The decrease in the overall mortality rate was significantly influenced by a reduction in infant mortality, which previously had been as high as 170 per 1000 live births. The level was lowered through health promotion campaigns such as improved hygiene and increased immunizations, and by the growth of an urban population that enjoyed better social and environmental conditions than in rural areas. The infant mortality rate, now between 60 and 70 per 1000 live births, continues to be high, particularly among certain less affluent socio-economic groups.

6. In 1963, the urban population constituted 41 per cent of the total population; in 1970, it was 47 per cent. By 1980, this had increased to 57 per cent. This change in population distribution has resulted in major strains in urban transportation, housing, health services, education, sanitation and waste services as well as in the supply of such commodities as electricity. This has increased the commercial and industrial concentration in and around Managua, which in recent years has received 34 per cent of public and private investment at the expense of other regions. Managua has also absorbed 65 per cent of the country's internal migrants because of the availability of better job opportunities and educational facilities, and the effects of the war, which has displaced thousands of people.

7. As a result of the economic crisis and continuing hostilities in Nicaragua, there has been an increase in emigration. Furthermore, the war has undoubtedly caused a great number of deaths, although official estimates have not been given.

8. By the year 2000, according to United Nations projections, Nicaragua will have a population of 5.3 million, some 85 per cent more than in 1980 (2.8 million). The annual growth rate during the 1990s is projected at 140,000 a year, a rate of 3 per cent.

9. Given the country's present economic crisis, the need to allocate a large proportion of Nicaragua's limited resources to defence, and the destruction caused by Hurricane Joan in October 1988, Nicaragua has had to postpone or reduce many of the development goals defined by the Government in 1979. These objectives sought primarily to improve the quality of life and achieve more equitable distribution of the benefits of development among the Nicaraguan population.

10. Agriculture is the country's dominant economic activity, employing some 45 per cent of the working population in 1980 and providing about 21 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) in 1986. However, agricultural production has been severely disrupted by hostilities in the countryside during the civil war. Output improved in the early 1980s with production being restored to pre-revolution levels, but it subsequently declined as a result of floods and droughts and has fluctuated throughout the 1980s due to adverse climatic conditions, the guerrilla campaign against the agricultural sector, drought, and disease.
11. The manufacturing sector accounted for approximately 28 per cent of GNP in 1986. During the period 1980-1985 industrial production increased by an annual rate of 0.3 per cent. There was a decline of 2 per cent in industrial output in 1987 compared with 1986, and development has been hampered by low levels of capital investment and a dependence on imported spare parts and raw materials.

12. Paralysis of industrial and commercial activity caused by the civil war and the decline in real terms of Nicaragua's GNP has meant that, between 1965 and 1985, GNP per capita declined at an estimated average rate of 2.1 per cent per year. According to World Bank estimates at the end of 1983, the country's total external public debt amounted to $3,417 million. Following an embargo on all Nicaraguan goods and sources imposed by a neighbouring country in May 1985, Nicaragua rapidly found new European markets for its exports of bananas, and improved trading links with many other countries.

13. According to the Latin America Weekly Report, in the first nine months of 1988 Nicaragua's inflation had reached 4,508 per cent. Exports are below 1987 levels, reaching $180 million in the first six months of 1988. Since the value of imports during the same period was $396 million, this left a trade deficit of $216 million. As a result, almost every sector depending on imports is showing a downturn. Moreover, manufacturing was expected to have declined by more than a third in 1988, and in agriculture, the higher technology crops and those requiring capital investment in infrastructure are also showing decreased production. The economic crisis has been exacerbated by a fairly high level of unemployment and under-employment, estimated at 26 per cent in 1988.

14. As a partial response to the economic crisis, the Government devalued both the "parallel" and official exchange rates in late November 1988 and the official price of the United States dollar rose by 67 per cent. On 5 December 1988, the Government approved a further devaluation of the new currency. Amidst this precarious financial situation, Nicaragua was hit by Hurricane Joan in October 1988 with disastrous effects. The total damage caused by the hurricane was estimated at $840 million.

15. In spite of these economic difficulties the Government has taken steps to improve social conditions. In 1980 a Government literacy campaign helped reduce the rate of illiteracy from 59 per cent to 12 per cent. Moreover, a National Health System was established to decrease infant and maternal mortality. However, the results of these innovations have been limited because of the overriding effects of economic turmoil and continued warfare.

National Population Seminar

16. In September 1988, the first Nicaraguan National Seminar on Population was held in Managua with the participation of a great number of representatives from public, private and governmental organizations. The seminar was
inaugurated by the Minister of Health and was brought to a close by the Nicaraguan President. While agreeing that population strategies had a place in the country's revolution, participants emphasized that ongoing hostilities would certainly limit the implementation of successful development programmes.

17. Seminar participants identified the following areas as critical needs in addressing population concerns in Nicaragua: (a) recognition of the importance of integrating population variables into development plans; (b) recognition of the importance of women in the socio-economic and political development of Nicaragua; (c) the need to establish expertise in the area of population and development; (d) recognition of the importance of improving knowledge of the interrelationship between demographic variables and the socio-economic process; (e) sensitization of government officials and national experts to the need to formulate a population policy; (f) an awareness that population policy would need to be considered in all central, regional and sectoral planning.

18. The seminar was a benchmark in the history of Nicaragua's population process and in the culmination of the UNFPA's second programme. The Government will now direct its efforts towards defining a more operational population policy that can be translated readily into concrete activities.

19. The Government perceives the country's population growth rate to be satisfactory and thus plans no direct intervention. However, it considers the fertility rate to be too high from the point of view of MCH, and therefore supports family planning activities. The Government's major preoccupation is maternal and infant mortality. The Government is also concerned with the spatial distribution of the population and proposes to develop points of growth throughout the country by improving water supplies, rural electrification, housing and environmental sanitation. The Government also considers emigration to be too high.

III. REVIEW OF UNFPA AND OTHER ASSISTANCE TO DATE

20. In 1980 the Governing Council approved a programme for Nicaragua. The programme, which was based on the recommendations of a programming mission, provided $4 million for assistance in the areas of MCH/FP, population information, education and communication (IEC), data collection, population dynamics, and women and development. The actual expenditures were approximately half of the funds allocated because it was not possible to conduct the census planned for 1982. In 1985, the Governing Council approved $6 million, including $4.8 million from multi-bilateral sources, for a four-year MCH/FP project (1985-1988). The other areas covered by the programme were population IEC, data collection (demographic survey) and population policy formulation.

Findings of UNFPA evaluation mission

21. In October-November 1988, UNFPA fielded an evaluation mission to Nicaragua to provide information for future programming. The evaluation report analyzed the five UNFPA-funded projects in relation to: (a) development of institutional...
and management capacity; (b) development of human resources; and (c) development of new approaches and effective plans of action. The projects evaluated were population education, the national sex education programme, the demographic survey, population policy, and extension of the coverage and quality of MCH/FP.

22. Development of institutional and management capacity. The mission found that three of the five projects had created population units within governmental institutions: the Directorate of Population and Employment within the Planning and Budget Secretariat; the Population Department within the National Institute of Statistics and Census; and the Population Education Unit within the Ministry of Education. A Sex Education Committee was created through the sex education project executed by the Government. The development of these units has led to an increased recognition of the importance of the population component in each respective sector. Public officials of the Directorate of Population and Employment, for example, are now convinced of the importance of integrating population factors into policy and development planning and of the need to analyze such factors at all levels. Moreover, the Ministry of Education wishes to incorporate population components into the new primary and secondary school curricula through training of teachers and the development of materials such as textbooks and teachers' guides.

23. Since receiving technical assistance from UNFPA, the Population Department of the National Institute of Statistics and Census has had a higher retention rate for its personnel, thus facilitating the overall consistency and effectiveness of its work. Its major task has been the development of a demographic survey, which was conducted some years ago. However, despite staff continuity and adequate technical assistance, the results of the survey are still not available. The Maternal and Child Health Department of the Ministry of Health, on the other hand, has experienced some difficulties because of inadequate human resource management and equipment/vehicle maintenance and the high turnover of personnel due to low salaries.

24. The Sex Education Committee has realized excellent results. The Committee, whose membership is composed of officials from the Ministries of Health and Education and the Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security, has promoted and coordinated teaching and communication activities through newspapers, radio and television and has enhanced the country's recognition of the need to make sex education available. The mission did identify two major weaknesses, however: (a) too great a dependence on video technology and insufficient funds for the upkeep of such equipment; and (b) the Committee's lack of a legal basis, which made it dependent on the willingness of the various ministries to participate.

25. Development of human resources. All of the projects listed above, with the exception of the sex education project, provided personnel training. Many staff members from the Ministries of Health and Education, the Budget and Planning Secretariat and the National Institute of Statistics and Census benefited from UNFPA-funded scholarships. Nevertheless, not all of these personnel remained in their positions once they had been trained. In this...
regard, the National Institute of Statistics and Census is notable in that the majority of its professional staff have remained in the institution. The projects have trained the staff of the various institutions for their work in research, analysis and planning through scholarships and technical assistance from consultants and Project Directors. The evaluation report notes that the staff of the MCH/FP Department have not received sufficient training in the field of administration and family planning. The report also notes that training in administration and programme management has been weak in all the projects and that this was a major deficiency in the second Nicaraguan country programme.

26. **Developing innovative approaches and effective action plans.** The evaluation report noted that the five projects had many innovative aspects, notably: (a) the inclusion of population education components in the education programme for the first time; (b) the formulation of a new approach to sex education; (c) the integration of population variables into the planning process; (d) the organization of an MCH/FP study of risk factors; (e) the encouragement of participation by women, youth and community organizations; and (f) the establishment of a high degree of complementarity and co-ordination among the different projects and between the project's priorities and the Government's priorities.

27. The mission found a high level of donor co-ordination through the Ministry of External Co-operation. For example, in the last four or five years the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been directed at increasing production while the UNFPA contribution has been the most important aspect of United Nations assistance in improving social conditions. The MCH/FP project co-ordinated activities with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and there is an ongoing dialogue between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and UNICEF to ensure continued co-operation.

28. **Improving the Government's self-reliance in population activities.** UNFPA projects have constituted an important step towards technical self-reliance in the formulation and implementation of population programmes in Nicaragua. As previously indicated, the projects have enhanced institution building, staff training and the provision of equipment. Nevertheless, Nicaragua is still far from being self-sufficient in the sectors that have received UNFPA assistance, and there is a crucial need for continued UNFPA support during the next programme cycle. In this regard, the Government of Nicaragua still needs assistance to strengthen the technical and managerial capabilities of the National Institute of Statistics and Census, the Directorate of Population and Employment, the Ministry of Education's Population Unit, and the Ministry of Health.

**Other external assistance**

29. A variety of organizations have provided population assistance to Nicaragua. The World Food Programme, for example, has provided assistance for feeding pregnant and lactating women as well as pre-school children. The World
Health Organization (WHO) has a family health programme that collaborates with the Government in strengthening maternal and child health by improving the technical and policy-making functions of the Division of Medical Care. In addition, PAHO is providing assistance in such areas as nutrition, mental health, immunization and dental care. UNICEF has been assisting the Government in the implementation of the Child Survival Programme in close collaboration with UNFPA. Collaboration between UNICEF and UNFPA has been successfully co-ordinated by PAHO.

30. The Governments of Norway and Finland provide assistance for MCH through UNFPA. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide assistance in the population area are the Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraception, Family Planning International, General Service Foundation, International Development Research Centre, International Planned Parenthood Federation, and International Projects Assistance Service.

IV. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME 1989-1992

31. The proposed programme for Nicaragua is designed to address the specific areas of need identified by the National Seminar on Population and draws upon the findings of the UNFPA evaluation mission. The programme also takes into account discussions with Government officials during a programming mission to Nicaragua and the documents prepared for the National Seminar.

32. The four-year programme of assistance proposed by UNFPA amounts to $12.2 million, of which $5.9 million would be committed from UNFPA's regular resources. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, the balance of up to $6.3 million may be provided by UNFPA. If and to the extent this is not possible, UNFPA would seek to cover the shortfall from other sources including multi-bilateral sources. The programme is composed of MCH/FP, IEC, basic data collection, population policy, and women, population and development.

Programme objectives

33. The proposed country programme would assist the Nicaraguan Government in achieving the following objectives: (a) strengthening the institutional and human resource capacity in formulating and implementing population activities; (b) facilitating the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive population policy and the incorporation of population factors in development plans; (c) contributing to an understanding of population and human sexuality among both youth and adults that would lead to a modification of male attitudes concerning female roles and to rational and healthy reproductive behaviour; (d) improving the quality and coverage of MCH/FP services in order to reduce infant and maternal mortality and to increase contraceptive prevalence; and (e) enhancing the country's capacity to conduct the population and housing censuses.

34. These programmes would seek to achieve these objectives through the following strategies:
(a) The programme would strive to create an independent National Population Committee with representatives from appropriate sectors that would provide technical assistance and co-ordination for the population activities of all sectors. This Committee would have a Sub-Committee on Sex Education co-ordinated by the National Institute of Women and the Sandinista Youth Organization.

(b) The programme would concentrate on strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of governmental institutions and organizations involved in population activities through technical advice and a structured training programme. The institutions involved would be the Ministries of Health and Education, the National Institute of Statistics and Census, the Budget and Planning Secretariat, the National Institute of Women and the Sandinista Youth Organization.

(c) Key factors would be the development of the primary health care system and the targeting of pregnant women at highest risk in MCH/FP services delivery, with special emphasis on community participation.

(d) The programme would reinforce the existing governmental infrastructure for demographic and socio-economic data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination.

35. A major change from the previous programme would be that all projects would be preceded by a preparatory phase. At this stage, a consultant, in conjunction with the national project participants, would diagnose the institution’s situation in relation to its stated objectives to determine needs, formulate a training programme, make necessary arrangements for the provision of equipment, and draft the project proposal, taking into consideration the special needs of women, for presentation to UNFPA. Furthermore, this phase would incorporate discussions with the Government in order to reach an agreement about ways of solving the problem of high turnover of personnel.

Maternal and child health and family planning

36. UNFPA proposes to continue its support in the area of MCH/FP. The protection of maternal and child health has been a priority of the Government since the beginning of the revolutionary process. During the period 1981-1984, there was increased coverage of pre-natal and post-partum care and enhanced detection of early pregnancy. This continued during 1985-1987 but at a slower pace. In relation to family planning, according to the UNFPA evaluation report, acceptance is only 4.3 per cent of women of reproductive age.

37. The project would seek to improve health services in the country by utilizing the results of a risk factor study, reinforcing the referral system, increasing family planning services, providing staff training, and providing equipment and medical supplies. The strategy would be based on primary health care, identification of risk factors and community participation. The Ministry of Health has begun to implement a policy of decentralization that should enhance the efficacy of programmes in this area. Emphasis would be placed on
training, logistics, supervision, evaluation, communication and educational activities. The proposed project would require $6 million, of which UNFPA would provide $1.7 million to cover costs of family planning activities and the provision of contraceptive supplies. Additional support is expected from Finland, the Netherlands and Norway, through multi-bilateral arrangements. The project would be executed by PAHO.

**Information, education and communication**

38. UNFPA assistance of $600,000 is proposed for activities in the IEC field. Population components have been included in the curricula of elementary and secondary schools, teachers have been trained, materials developed, and a parent-orientation programme has been designed and implemented. The proposed UNFPA assistance would be used to further the incorporation of the population components throughout all levels of the school system, enhance the training of school teachers, and step up activities directed at parents, with an emphasis on motivating male participation in all activities planned. UNFPA assistance is also required for the development of an information system to be used to monitor and evaluate activities in this area.

**Basic data collection and analysis**

39. **Census.** UNFPA assistance is urgently needed to support the conduct of the census planned for the early 1990s in Nicaragua. The last population census was carried out in 1971, and the results of the socio-demographic survey are still not available. The lack of reliable and updated data has been an obstacle to all population-related projects. The formulation of a population policy also requires reliable and accurate data. Preliminary estimates place the cost of the census at approximately $4 million, of which UNFPA would provide $2 million to cover preparatory activities, including the analysis of the structure, function, channels of communication and procedural working, project formulation, training and equipment of the National Institute of Statistics. Additional support would be provided by the Netherlands and Norway through multi-bilateral arrangements. If the census is not carried out or is delayed, funds would be re-programmed for other activities. The United Nations Department for Technical Co-operation for Development (UNDTCD) would provide technical backstopping.

**Population policy formulation**

40. UNFPA proposes to provide $750,000 to support the creation of a National Committee on Population and Development. This Committee would be composed of representatives of all ministries and organizations involved in population and related activities, and its primary function would be to formulate a population policy and co-ordinate all population activities in Nicaragua.

**Women, population and development**

41. Sex education activities such as radio and television programmes, training, and workshops aimed at the formal and non-formal sectors have been successfully implemented by the Sandinista Youth Organization. However, these
have been limited by a lack of managerial ability, which has affected the execution, monitoring and evaluation of the work. The National Institute of Women (NIW) considers sex education to be a priority for Nicaragua today. Accordingly, the Sandinista Youth Organization and NIW have stressed the need to set up a permanent institutional framework that will provide an adequate forum for the more effective organization of activities in this area.

42. UNFPA assistance of $650,000 is proposed for the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Sex Education within the National Population Committee, which would incorporate representatives from all appropriate sectors, and would be co-ordinated by the Sandinista Youth Organization and NIW. This sub-committee would have the function of formulating and implementing a National Sex Education Programme and carrying out research on men's and women's attitudes towards sex education.

Programme reserve

43. UNFPA proposes to establish a programme reserve of $200,000 to cover yet undetermined needs that may come up during the programme. This reserve would be activated if the general conditions, prerequisites and institutional framework necessary for effective implementation of projects have been decided upon and approved.

Co-ordination and programme management

44. The execution of the programme would be co-ordinated through the office of the UNFPA/UNDP representative in Nicaragua in conjunction with the National Population Committee. Support activities for the programme would be provided by a National Programme Officer and a secretary.

Evaluation and monitoring

45. There would be periodic country reviews with participation from both the Government and UNFPA. In this programme, special attention would be paid to monitoring and evaluating the contributions of individual projects to the achievements of the overall programme objectives. Each project formulated under this programme would have a built-in plan for monitoring and evaluation.

Financial summary

46. As stated in paragraph 1, UNFPA would provide assistance in the amount of $12.2 million, of which $5.9 million would be committed from UNFPA's regular resources. If UNFPA's funding situation permits, the balance of up to $6.3 million may be provided by UNFPA. If, and to the extent, this is not possible,
UNFPA would seek to cover the shortfall from other sources including multi-bilateral sources. The following table depicts how the programme areas would accommodate these two levels of funding:

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<th>Programme Area</th>
<th>UNFPA resources $</th>
<th>Other resources $</th>
<th>Total $</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population information, education and communication</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Women, population and development</td>
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<td>6,300,000</td>
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V. RECOMMENDATION

47. The Executive Director recommends that the Governing Council:

   (a) **Approve** the programme for Nicaragua in the amount of $12.2 million for four-years;

   (b) **Authorize** the Executive Director to commit an amount of $5.9 million from UNFPA's regular resources;

   (c) **Further authorize** the Executive Director to provide the balance of up to $6.3 million from UNFPA's regular resources, if such resources are available. If and to the extent they are not, further authorize the Executive Director to seek to cover the shortfall from other sources, including multi-bilateral sources;

   (d) **Authorize** the Executive Director to allocate the funds and make appropriate arrangements with the Government of Nicaragua and with the executing agencies.