Major Trends Affecting Families in Central America and the Caribbean

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Introduction

Though an elusive concept, the family is a social institution that binds two or more individuals into a primary group to the extent that the members of the group are related to one another on the basis of blood relationships, affinity or some other symbolic network of association. It is an essential pillar upon which all societies are built and with such a character, has transcended time and space. Often times, it has been mooted that the most constant thing in life is change, a phenomenon that is characteristic of the family irrespective of space and time. The dynamic character of family structures, - including members' status, their associated roles, functions and interpersonal relationships, - has an important impact on a host of other social institutional spheres, prospective economic fortunes, political decision-making and sustainable futures.

Assuming that the ultimate goal of all societies is to enhance quality of life, the family constitutes a worthy unit of inquiry. Whether from a social or economic standpoint, the family is critical in stimulating the well being of a people. The family has been and will continue to be subjected to myriad social, economic, cultural, political and environmental forces that shape it. In fact, policy makers should consider the impact on families when determining a host of social policies concerning the well being of children, older persons, the development of human capital, the accumulation of national wealth and promotion of sustainable development.

This paper is concerned with reviewing important trends affecting families in the region. It focuses on the range of factors associated with five major trends that are known to impact upon family life. These trends may continue to have implications for different forms of family living in the years ahead. The major trends are:

(i) Changes in family structure: focusing on smaller size households, delayed marriage and childbearing, increased rates of divorce, and single parenthood,

(ii) Increased migration,

(iii) Demographic ageing and its social and economic implications,

(iv) The HIV/AIDS pandemic, and

(v) The impact of globalization on families.

Regional Coverage: Central America and the Caribbean

Though characterized by different levels of development, the historical legacy of the countries of Central America has spawned relative homogeneity across the region with respect to linguistic traditions, ethnic composition and cultural expression. Belize, despite its British heritage and membership within the Caribbean Community (Caricom), displays many of the vestiges and social artifacts of its Hispanic neighbours and the

country may have more in common with its Central American neighbours than its Anglophone partners. Regarding population size, the countries of Central America exhibit considerable differences. The largest country, Mexico has more than 103 million inhabitants. For the other countries population size ranges from 12 million in Guatemala to almost 7 million in Honduras, 6.5 million in El Salvador, 5.4 million in Nicaragua, 4 million in Costa Rica and 3 million in Panama.

While the countries of Central America are contiguous mainland nations, the countries of the Caribbean are primarily small island states, the majority having a very small land area and population size. Only Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have populations in excess of one million and among these five countries, the population sizes are extremely variable, ranging from 1.3 million in Trinidad and Tobago to 12 million in Cuba. Interestingly, Belize is the only country in Central America with a population size that is consistent with those of the majority of Caribbean islands that have populations not exceeding 350,000. Unlike Central America, the Caribbean Sub-Region is much more heterogeneous despite being much smaller. The historical legacy of the islands was varied and the linguistic diversity of the region shows this. The Caribbean boasts four linguistic regions – the Anglophone, Francophone, the Hispanic and the Dutch-speaking - with each region bearing socio-cultural vestiges that are uniquely associated with its colonial past.

The ethnic character of populations in Central American countries is comprised mainly of mestizo and Amerindian persons. In several of these countries, there are small sub-populations of African descent, many of whom may have had ancestral origins in Caribbean territories. Though being part of the Caribbean, the populations of the two Hispanic Caribbean countries, namely Cuba and the Dominican Republic, exhibit demographic characteristics that are more like those of Central American countries. With respect to the Anglophone Caribbean, populations are principally of African descent with much smaller sub-populations of East Indian, Mixed, European and Middle Eastern origins. In the Caribbean countries, Trinidad and Tobago is a model of ethnic diversity as persons of East Indian and African origin collectively account for at least 80 per cent of the country’s population, each group accounting for a similar proportion of the total population. Except for Haiti that has an overwhelmingly large proportion of persons of African origin, the Francophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean generally have substantial populations of European or mixed origins.

Religion is a dominant feature in the lives of individuals and its value is usually reinforced within families. Christianity and in particular Catholicism, has been a dominant force throughout Central America and the Caribbean, while Protestant denominations predominate especially in the Anglophone Caribbean. In countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Hinduism and Islam are major religions that also have profound influences on family life. Generally speaking, these religions are characterized by doctrines and teachings that have profound implications for family life, including the formation of unions, spousal roles, procreation and decisions surrounding the socialization of offspring.

Demographics, Social Structure and Quality of Life[1]

The formation and dissolution of unions and in particular, patterns associated with such life stage events are critical to the process of family formation. In Central America and particularly in the Caribbean, consensual unions have persisted alongside unions characterized by formal marriage. While family formation has been triggered by women's participation in visiting relationships primarily in young age groups and notably in the twenties, common-law unions and formal marriage continue to be the main platforms upon which procreation and families are formed during women's lifetime. This pattern has been supported by Demographic and Health Surveys conducted in the 1980s and 1990s in a number of Central American and Caribbean countries.[2]

Around 1950, there was considerable variation in the proportion of persons in consensual unions relative to all persons in union, such proportions ranging from 10 per cent in Chile, 50 per cent in Panama and almost 75 per cent in Haiti. In the Anglophone Caribbean in the early 1980s, (Mc Kenzie 1993) about two-thirds of all women were in formal marriage or a common-law relationship with the remaining one-third either in visiting unions, no longer in union or never in a union. There was little variation between the patterns observed across the countries, a principal exception being in Trinidad and Tobago where substantially greater proportions of women were involved in formal marriage due mainly to its East Indian sub-population. The 1987 Demographic and Health Surveys in Trinidad and Tobago, found that 41 percent of the women aged 15-49 years were currently married, 13.5 per cent were in common-law unions and 14.3 per cent in visiting unions. Formal marriage and common-law unions have persisted and are likely to be the basis of conjugal unions of women in the Caribbean Sub-Region. For selected Central American and Caribbean countries, Table 2 and Table 3 summarize the distribution of women aged 15-49 years according to marital status for specific periods in the 1980s and 1990s. In general, findings in the various countries support the view that with the exception of teenagers, women are most frequently found either in formal marriage or in consensual unions.

Common-law and visiting unions have traditionally been formations associated with individuals from lower socio-economic groups in Caribbean societies. Nonetheless, recent orientations indicate the prevalence of common-law unions has increased among women from middle and higher socio-economic levels (Mc Kenzie, 1993).

> *There used to be an emphasis on respectability and maintenance of the status hierarchy through approved family behaviour, with*

[1] Notwithstanding the proliferation of typologies to classify union status in Central America and the Caribbean, the paper seeks to combine union and marital status to obtain a profile of the conjugal status of women in the region. Using women as the point of reference to evaluate family structures in Central America and the Caribbean, the paper focuses upon their current union states, that is, formal marriage, common-law union, visiting, no longer in union (i.e. widowed, divorced and separated) and never in union.

[2] El Salvador (DHS-1985), Mexico (DHS-1987), Trinidad and Tobago (DHS-1987), Dominican Republic (DHS-1986, 1991 and 1996), Haiti (DHS-1994/1995 and 2000), Guatemala (DHS-1995 and 1999) and Nicaragua (DHS-1997/1998)

> *marriage preceding childbearing and formal divorce as a means of dissolution. But there is also a recent increasing movement among well-educated and/or high status married women toward motherhood, perhaps in emulation of the lower-income matrifocal imperative. There also may be an increase, among upper- and middle-income groups, in consensual unions, perhaps reflecting increasing tolerance of non-marital unions in Western industrial societies generally as well as the home-grown example of lower income Caribbean groups. (Mc Kenzie, 1993)*

Despite greater acceptance of the Western ideal of the nuclear family with male breadwinners and a growing tendency for females to be in the labour force, in contemporary Caribbean society, there is concern for the plight of the single mother and the matrifocal extended family that lives on its margins. They are among the most vulnerable and often depend upon the financial contribution of men who wield power on the basis of their occupations, community status, age or some other symbolic criterion. With the current educational advancement of women, the latter pattern is likely to intensify. This is also likely to sustain or even further exacerbate levels of single motherhood in the Caribbean as well as in Central American countries.

The distribution of women according to union status can be considered as a proxy for exposure to sexual intercourse and by extension, the risk of childbearing as a complementary mechanism in the formation of families. This means that the nature, stability and pattern of unions are critical factors – exposure to intercourse and influencing variations in women's fertility and family size. Evidence confirms that the frequency of sexual intercourse between partners varied in accordance with the type of union, the greatest frequency being associated with formal marriage and the lowest with visiting unions (Stycos and Back, 1964). While there appears to be very little temporal variation in the persistence of conjugal unions across the countries of Central America and the Caribbean, fertility levels have been on the decline. At best, the impact of conjugal status on fertility as a mechanism for family formation is likely to be small. This suggests that there should be an examination of those factors that are likely to influence variations in the number of children desired by women and couples.

Ageing can be gauged by examining that proportion of a population that is aged 65 years and over. Throughout Central America and the Caribbean, Table 4 shows that the number of older persons increased during the last thirty years. By 2000, the concentration of older persons in Caribbean populations was generally greater than that found in Central American countries, noteworthy exceptions being Haiti. In Barbados and Cuba, at least 10 per cent of the respective populations were older persons. Population projections show that by 2015 there are likely to be relatively modest increases in the proportion of older persons in the populations of most countries of the region. In Central America, Table 4 shows that countries such as Panama, Costa Rica and Mexico have relatively larger older populations. Mexico in particular, will have a large number of older persons. Table 5 shows the median age and the ageing index, supporting previously observed differentials based upon estimated proportions 65 years and over.

Between 1980 and the late 1990s, the proportion of persons attaining secondary education has generally increased across the region irrespective of gender (Table 6). With respect to secondary education, the table also indicates a more favourable enrolment patterns among females than among males in the mid to late 1990s. Secondary education and certainly tertiary education are known to provide individuals and females in particular with knowledge, prospective opportunities and life chances that could shape decisions that influence childbearing, childrearing, fertility regulation and exposure to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The impact of attaining secondary and tertiary education is less pronounced with regard to decisions to migrate. Migratory behaviour and responses are often functions of established familial networks in host countries and formalized programmes for recruiting temporary labour on a contractual basis.

Tertiary level education is associated with life choices that inhibit fertility levels particularly among adult women of childbearing age. In 2000, Anglophone Caribbean countries such as Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago had consistently higher levels of tertiary enrolment than countries in Central America (Table 7). Though low by Caribbean standards, it should be noted that Haiti has exhibited tertiary enrolment rates that are higher than those of some Central American countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Whether in Central America or in the Caribbean, projections suggest that countries are likely to exhibit increases in gross tertiary enrolment by 2015, the bulk of which may largely be due to the educational advancement of females. The prospect of employment in modern sectors with high returns to employees is greater among persons with tertiary level education and is likely to secure advantages in the labour market and a better quality of life for individuals and their kin. With respect to women, higher rates of tertiary enrolment may be associated with delayed marriage and childbearing, both of which are critical precursors in inhibiting the formation of families.

Women have also experienced tremendous gains with regard to their participation in the labour force. Between 1970 and 2000, evidence indicates persistent increases in participation rates and greater gender equality among the Hispanic countries of Central America (Table 8). In the Caribbean, similar assessments of labour force participation are available for Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, and with the exception of Haiti, indicate persistent increases in female labour force participation. Such increases are not only a function of women's educational achievements over the past three decades, they are also often attributed to social movements that have stimulated greater gender equity in social relations. They also reveal emergent trends in familial living arrangements resulting in single mothers who have sought work to support their families.

Since 1970, the majority of countries of Central America and the Caribbean have experienced variations in rates of urbanization (Table 9). Nonetheless, less than half of the populations of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras lived in urban areas at the beginning of the new millennium and with the exception of El Salvador, such a pattern is projected to persist into the next decade. In Panama, Nicaragua and Mexico, the majority of people live in urban areas, though the pace of urbanization appeared greatest in Mexico. In contrast, the small physical size of the majority of Caribbean islands

present difficulties in classifying their populations into urban-rural spaces. With respect to the larger Caribbean islands, Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago have population distributions that are predominantly urban and likely to remain that way. Though predominantly urban, countries such as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic still have large proportions of their populations (exceeding 40 per cent) living in rural areas. Haiti, on the other hand, continues to be predominantly rural.

The prevalence of poverty among households in Jamaica, though unacceptably high, is lower than those of most countries in Central America with the exception of Costa Rica (Table 10). In the countries highlighted in Table 10, rural areas have a higher prevalence of poverty than urban areas. With the exception of Haiti, lower rates of poverty are observed among households in the Caribbean islands, than among Central American countries. Though levels are unacceptably high in the majority of the islands, they appear to be lowest in the Bahamas and Barbados. In general, households below the poverty line tend to be larger, headed by females who are often single mothers with dependent children, or contain at least one elderly person living alone or in an extended family setting sometimes having responsibility for the entire household. In addition, poverty is often associated with risky sexual behaviour that exposes men and women to contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. Such practices may be borne out of the need for poor individuals to sustain viable livelihoods for themselves and their families in the face of limited human and social capital.

By virtue of the life stage functions, adults aged 15-49 years are instrumental in shaping trends in family formation, participation in the labour force and migratory movements. This sub-population consists of women who are in prime childbearing ages, persons who are principally engaged in initiating or dissolving unions, persons who are most likely to migrate because of disequilibria in labour markets or because of decisions to form or dissolve unions, and persons who are in the prime of their working lives and seek work in order to secure a livelihood for themselves and their families. Adults aged 15-49 years also are most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. When they are also parents, their children, are at risk of becoming orphans. Anglophone Caribbean countries are estimated to have fewer than 1000 AIDS orphans (Table 11). This has also been observed in Belize, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. There is evidence of substantially larger numbers of AIDS orphans in Guatemala (4,000), Honduras (4.000) and Mexico (5,000). The situation is much more critical in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where reports indicate that as many as 49,000 and 7,000 children respectively have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.

Across Central America and the Caribbean, there is noteworthy variation in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Among adults aged 15-49 years, the highest reported prevalence rates were in a few Caribbean countries notably Haiti, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago (Table 11). In Trinidad and Tobago, the prevalence doubled between 1999 and 2001. With the exception of Cuba, prevalence rates have generally been higher in the Caribbean countries than in Central America, where the highest rates are observed in Belize, Honduras and Panama. Since the increased prevalence and spread of HIV/AIDS is likely to lead to social disintegration of families and by extension, communities, an important objective will be to determine

those factors that pose the greatest threat to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Consideration should be given to the efficiency of programmes adopted by the public sector and the different organs of civil society to provide information, education and communication. In addition to reinforcing levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices, public health and other interventions should address social norms and values that contribute to the persistence of promiscuity in social relationships. This is absolutely essential to inhibit the spread of HIV/AIDS and its adverse effects upon families.

Trends in Families

It is important to evaluate the impact that specific trends have upon social functions within the family. These trends include changing family structure that is predicated upon changes in household size, delayed marriage and childbearing as well as single parenthood, rising levels of migration, demographic ageing, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and globalization. A number of social functions have been ascribed to the family as a social unit. These include reproduction, security, socialization and education. More important, it is worth noting that there is an interaction between the set of forces that enable families to satisfy these functions. The evolution of trends in Central America and the Caribbean have implications for changing patterns of reproduction, security, socialization and education. While these functions are universal, the degree to which they are satisfied may differ across countries.

While family structure is not the same as household structure, households often consist of at least one family residing within a specific physical space. Exceptions arise in the context of single person households in which persons live alone. This has implications for the security of single persons whether due to economic factors, such as the prospective availability of scarce resources, or social factors, many of which become evident when persons living alone become more vulnerable. Generally speaking, family structure can be gauged based upon examinations of average household size, fertility rates, headship status and single parenthood.

Fertility, Family Size and Family Structure

Across the region, variations in fertility are measured in accordance with the total fertility rate (TFR). Fertility levels were generally high in Central America during the early 1970s with TFRs in excess of 4 live births per woman (Table 12). A similar situation persisted in the majority of the Caribbean countries with the exception of Cuba, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago where TFRs ranged between 3 and 4 live births per woman. In the early 1990s, fertility levels were still in excess of 3 live births per woman in every Central American country. In the Caribbean, high levels of fertility in excess of 4 live births persisted in Haiti and Grenada during the early 1990s. Slightly lower levels - in excess of 3 live births per woman - were observed in the Dominican Republic and St. Lucia. Most of the remaining countries had fertility levels that were approaching replacement fertility (i.e. 2.1 live births per woman) while Barbados and Cuba were below replacement level fertility with TFRs of 1.8 and 1.9 respectively.

In the early 2000s, the Central American countries were still observed to have fertility levels in excess of 3 live births per woman, the exceptions being Mexico, Panama and Costa Rica where the respective TFRs were 2.9, 2.6 and 2.5 live births per woman. It is therefore possible for Costa Rica, Panama and perhaps Mexico to attain replacement level fertility by 2010 if fertility declines continue at the same rate. With the exception of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the remaining Caribbean countries were observed to have attained fertility levels in the vicinity of replacement fertility or below replacement fertility. Altogether, six countries had TFRs below the replacement level of 2.1 live births per woman. These included Cuba (1.5), Trinidad and Tobago (1.7), Barbados (1.8), Dominica (1.8), the Netherlands Antilles (1.9) and St. Lucia (2.0). Such a decline is particularly remarkable in the cases of St. Lucia and Dominica insofar as these two countries had fertility levels on par with their Central American counterparts in the early 1970s. If these patterns of fertility decline persist, it is quite possible that every Caribbean country with the exception of Haiti and the Dominican Republic could have below-replacement fertility levels by 2010.

Women's educational attainment is a key factor that is associated with variations in fertility levels. Based upon data principally from the Demographic and Health Surveys in Central American and Caribbean countries, Table 13 summarizes the relationship between total fertility rates and education in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua. Generally speaking, declining fertility is associated with increases in educational attainment, although in the case of the Dominican Republic, evidence indicates declining fertility irrespective of level of educational attainment. Between the early 1980s and the mid to late 1990s, there were notable declines in the fertility levels of women whose highest levels of education did not exceed the secondary level. There is also evidence of declining levels of fertility among women who have attained higher levels of education in Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua. Except for Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s, Trinidad and Tobago in the 1980s and Jamaica in the 1990s, similar demographic surveys have not been undertaken in the Anglophone Caribbean, making it difficult to gauge similar outcomes in the majority of Caribbean countries.

The age at first birth is also associated with level of education that, in turn, has already been shown to bear a relationship with fertility at national levels. Table 14 provides estimates of the median age at first birth among women aged 40-44 and 45-49 years by highest level of educational attainment in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua. In general, the median ages at first birth indicate that women who attained secondary or tertiary levels of education gave birth to their first child at older ages on average. This supports the view that the pursuit of secondary and tertiary education contributes to delaying the onset of childbearing and is likely to reduce women's fertility. In fact, the onset of childbearing is in several instances a function of the age at entry into first union. This means that the onset of childbearing is a mediating factor in assessing a possible relationship between women's age at entry into first union and fertility at national levels.

In explaining variations in age at entry into first union, Table 15 makes reference to median age at first union. Table 15 examines the median age at first union by age group and highest educational attainment for women in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Mexico. In the three countries, there is evidence that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with later entry into first union regardless of women's age. In the contexts of the nations under review, it is possible to surmise that the inverse relationship between educational attainment and women's fertility is mediated through age at entry into first union and age at first birth. In other words, higher levels of education are generally associated with higher median ages at entry into first union, higher median ages at first birth and the prospective reductions in natural exposure time for childbearing. Such prospects are likely to culminate in lower total fertility rates at national levels.

Female labour force participation has increased in a number of Central American and Caribbean countries in the last three decades. Substantial gains in accessing secondary and tertiary level education, made it highly likely that their prospects of seeking and securing employment will be enhanced, leading to continued future increases in female labour force participation. Increased participation in the labour force is likely to expose greater proportions of women to new roles and stimulated responses to social stimuli which conflict with the prospect of childbearing and childrearing. In this regard, Gentler and Molyneaux (1994) noted that:

> *The most frequently observed fertility-reducing factors are those, which apparently increase the cost of children by increasing the value of women's time (typically female "wages and education") and reducing contraceptive costs (prices and travel time to supplies).*

Whether in Central American or Caribbean countries, increases in labour force participation appear to be associated with and could in fact be a function of female educational advancement. They could also be a function of a number of other social factors such as growing levels of female independence due to increased dissolution of unions resulting from separations, divorces and death. Women are increasingly becoming household heads whether by their choice to remain single or as a result of union dissolution, whether voluntary or involuntary. In such a capacity, they have to sustain themselves and their dependents. Notwithstanding the ambiguity associated with determining the magnitude of female-headed households, evidence indicates increases in female-headed households in a number of Central American and Caribbean countries (Table 16). In Central America, this pattern generally persists in urban as well as rural areas though more prevalent in the former. In the Caribbean, this is likely to be due to increases in the number of female single parents heading households because of union dissolution and the death of their spouses or partners. The dissolution of unions reduces women's risk of exposure to a pregnancy and this is further exacerbated in cases when such women have achieved desired levels of fertility and strive to prevent subsequent births.

The World Fertility Surveys and the Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys were conducted in a number of Anglophone Caribbean countries during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Guengant (1985) examined findings emanating from these surveys and concluded that future fertility levels in the region would hinge upon women and couples' perceptions of their attainment of a desired number of children. Such a conclusion was based upon Guengant's observation that despite the high unmet need in Anglophone Caribbean countries, fertility levels have been on the decline. Generally speaking, he noted that more than half of the potential users were not using contraceptives. Additionally, he made reference to a number of methodological artifacts that were likely to affect the quality of responses indicative of contraceptive use. In the case of El Salvador, Caceres-Henriquez et al (1997) claim that between 1983-1988 and 1988-1993, declining fertility levels were due to an increase in the prevalence of contraceptive use in rural areas or among illiterate women despite the fact that there is still evidence of unmet need. This means that more pronounced declines in fertility levels could have been attained. In contrast, there was no evidence of improvement among women living in urban areas or with higher levels of education whether reference is to fertility levels or the prevalence of contraceptive use.

Though generally higher in the Central American countries, average household size has been declining throughout Central America and the Caribbean during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Table 17). This decline is consistent with corresponding declines in fertility levels across the two sub-regions. Notwithstanding the observed declines in fertility, reductions in household size could also be a function of a greater prevalence of persons living alone or as single parents and an increasing prevalence of death that is consistent with the ageing of populations. ECLAC (1994) supports the view that during the 1980s, the size of Latin American households decreased because families had a smaller number of children, multi-generational households decreased, and the number of single parent families increased as did the number of persons living alone. In the early 1990s, ECLAC noted that the size of Latin American households at all socio-economic levels tended to become more homogeneous. In the Caribbean, evidence reveals consistent patterns of declines with respect to mean household size and mean number of children in households during the 1990s.

The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, reported declines in mean household size from 3.9 in 1992 to 3.4 in 2001 in Jamaica (PIOJ and STATIN 2002). Such findings are consistent with an inverse relationship between socio-economic status and household size, with the richest quintile estimated to have a mean household size of 2.26 and the poorest quintile a mean household size of 5.23 persons. Since 1975, it has been estimated that persons living alone have accounted for the greatest proportion of all households in Jamaica and in 2001, the corresponding proportion was 22.2 per cent. During the early 1990s, smaller Caribbean islands such as Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines exhibited markedly higher proportions of households that were occupied by persons who lived alone. The respective proportions were 28.6 per cent, 24.6 per cent, 22.7 per cent, 30.3 per cent and 22 per cent (St. Bernard, 2001). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the prevalence of single person households increased during the 1980s. In the majority of Caribbean countries,

more than one fifth of all single-person households contained elderly persons 65 years and over during the early 1990s (St. Bernard, 2001). Given projected increases in the concentration of older persons in the respective populations, declining fertility, increases in longevity and increasing prospects of union dissolution at older ages, the prevalence of single-person households observed during the 1980s is likely to persist in the 1990s and beyond. Such trends will be evaluated upon the release of the findings of the 2000 round of censuses conducted in the various Caribbean countries.

There is a higher prevalence of female-headed households in Caribbean countries than in Central American countries. In the larger countries of the Caribbean and in Central America, female-headed households are more prevalent in urban areas. Male-headed households continue to dominate in Central America (Table 18), particularly with regard to nuclear two-parent households. This residential differential persists irrespective of household structure. In the case of nuclear one-parent families, there is an overwhelming preponderance of female-headed household in Central American countries and in the Dominican Republic suggesting that the majority are single mother households. In the Central American countries, single-person households are predominantly male entities with probable exceptions arising in the case of those found in urban areas of Costa Rica and Guatemala.

According to the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2001, 44.7 per cent of all households were estimated to be female-headed (PIOJ and STATIN 2002). The survey also revealed that female-headed households have on average been larger than those headed by men though the latter have been at least three times more likely to have persons living alone. In addition, female-headed households were much less likely to have had a partner-presence and to have relatively more children when compared to male-headed households. In St. Lucia and in Haiti respectively, proportions of 42.8 per cent and 42.7 per cent of all households were estimated to be female-headed in the early 2000s (Table 16). Given observed patterns in the early 1990s, the prevalence of female headship in the smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean is likely to continue to exceed 40 per cent. However, lower levels of prevalence are likely to persist in Trinidad and Tobago, largely due to the patriarchal character that is a dominant feature in East Indian household (Chevannes 2002).

During 1994, a National Survey of Family Life was conducted in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1995, a Community Survey was conducted in Laventille, a working class, marginalized urban district situated on the eastern fringe of Port of Spain. Both surveys provided a basis for estimating the distribution of different family structures within households. For the nation as a whole, the majority of households had nuclear formations consisting at least of a husband and wife (40.3 per cent) (St. Bernard, 1997a). At least one fifth of all households were estimated to consist of extended family formations while just over 10 per cent consisted of single mother units. In Laventille, the majority of households (26.9 per cent) assumed the form of extended family entities (St. Bernard, 1997b). In comparison to national estimates, this working class community exhibited relatively larger proportions of households in which persons lived alone (20.4 per cent as opposed to 13.9 per cent) or as nuclear units consisting of at least two common-law

partners (19.4 per cent as opposed to 8.9 per cent). In nuclear households consisting of spouses and children, children were more likely to be living with their biological mother than their biological fathers, the respective proportions being 98.7 per cent as opposed to 96.9 per cent (St. Bernard, 1997a). In the context of nuclear households with common-law partners and children, the corresponding proportions were observed to be 93.9 per cent as opposed to 73.7 per cent. The survey also revealed that there is a preponderance of nuclear households (63.7 per cent) in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the Central American countries, the available data permit analyses of household poverty in urban areas (Table 19). During the 1990s, there were increases in the prevalence of female household headship among indigent households in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Panama. In households that were poor but not indigent, increases were also observed in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. In Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, female-headed households were more prevalent in indigent than in non-indigent poor or non-poor households. The prevalence of female heads of household was highest in Costa Rica and Panama. At the same time, Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico were observed to have had the highest proportion of female-headed households that were not poor (Table 20). In the three countries, approximately three quarters of the female-headed households were not poor in the late 1990s. Though not as high, similar favourable conditions persisted in Guatemala and El Salvador where just over three-fifths of the female-headed households were not poor. In contrast, the level of indigence among female-headed households was greatest in Honduras and Nicaragua being 39.4 per cent and 34.9 per cent respectively in the late 1990s (Table 20). In Honduras, the majority of female households were estimated to be indigent.

The countries of Central America and the Caribbean will likely continue to experience declining fertility levels that stabilize at or below the replacement fertility level during the early years of the twenty-first century. In general, the countries have increasing proportions of women with secondary or tertiary level education resulting in a greater likelihood that they will delay entry into first unions and the onset of pregnancy. The attainment of higher levels of education in conjunction with increased labour force participation may also reduce the desired number of births and ideal family size, as women are increasingly exposed to lifestyles that render children more costly. Thus, it is expected that there will be a greater thrust in the direction of spacing and limiting births to attain desired fertility levels. In a discussion of antecedents of fertility decline in Mexico, Brambila (1998) makes reference to the economic value of children and its impact upon increasing fertility levels in rural areas and inhibiting them in urban areas. In rural area, the desire to have a greater number of children is consistent with the notion of children as a source of wealth adding value to household economy as a result of their potential contribution in agricultural settings and by means of intergenerational capital flows. Given observed trends with respect to urbanization, female educational attainment and female labour force participation, fertility levels and by extension, average family size is likely to decrease and be sustained at lower levels than during the twentieth century.

Trends in Migration

The majority of countries of Central America and the Caribbean have been characterized by net losses of populations due to migration in the last half of the twentieth century. During 1995-2000, average annual net out-migration exceeded 300,000 in Mexico, 30,000 in Guatemala, 12,000 in Nicaragua, 8,000 in El Salvador; it was less than 5,000 in Honduras, Panama and Belize (Table 21). Costa Rica, on the other hand, saw an average annual influx of migrants of the magnitude of 20,000 during that period. Though smaller in absolute size, levels of out-migration in Caribbean countries were relatively greater than those observed in Central American countries. Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and to a lesser extent, the Dominican Republic experienced average annual net out-migration surpassing that of the countries of Central America with the exception of Mexico and Guatemala. Net losses to migration have been primarily due to inequalities in processes of development and greater levels of openness of economies and societies that continue to have negative effects upon the livelihoods of specific vulnerable groups (ECLAC 1993). In addition, the requirements of labour markets in North Atlantic societies especially for cheap labour in a range of unskilled activities further exacerbate migratory movements, a pattern that is likely to be sustained in the majority of countries in Central America and the Caribbean. However, it is important to state that there is very little knowledge about the extent of variation in the contribution that each of these factors has made to net out-migration.

There has always been a history of intra-regional migration within Central America and across Caribbean countries. With respect to extra-regional migration, the United States has been the principal host country for migrants from the two sub-regions. Canada and the United Kingdom have been host countries for smaller numbers of migrants originating in Caribbean countries although the United Kingdom was the more popular destination prior to the enactment of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act. In the case of Central America, Canada and to a lesser extent, Spain, have been among the principal host countries. In order to examine the impact of migration on prospective trends in families, it is important to consider a typology of migrants. Accordingly, four categories of persons have been deemed to be critical in the context of movements across national boundaries (ECLAC, 1993). These include (a) migrants admitted legally into host countries or as temporary residents, (b) contract labourers hired on the basis of some contractual agreement, (c) illegal immigrants and (d) asylum-seekers and refugees. During the 1980s, ECLAC noted that the United States admitted approximately six million legal immigrants with about 37 per cent having origins in Latin America and the Caribbean. Mexico accounted for about 70 per cent of the legal immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean though other countries such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guyana, Haiti and Guatemala were also noteworthy sources.

In Central America and the Caribbean, poverty and inadequate means to sustain livelihoods cause economically active household members to migrate with the hope of improving individual and familial well being. The United States and Canada have made contractual arrangements with governments in Caribbean and Central American countries to provide unskilled labour on a seasonal basis in activities such as agriculture. The

participants are primarily men on the margins of poverty. Guest worker programmes, as they are sometimes called, provide a basis for augmenting the well being of poor families through remittances. Jamaicans and Mexicans constitute the majority of the 17,000 temporary workers who are recruited on Canadian fruit, vegetable and tobacco farms annually (Martin and Widgren, 2002). To reduce the prospects of temporary workers seeking permanent residence in Canada, the programme has targeted applications from men aged 22-45 years who are married and have children. Insofar as these workers constitute a source of cheap labour and fill gaps that otherwise would remain unfilled in the domestic market, these guest worker programmes are likely to continue well into the future with associated financial benefits for workers and their families in Mexico and in the Caribbean. Guest worker programmes have reduced unemployment and enabled unemployed persons to use their earnings to establish small business enterprises. They may also promote an ethos of self-reliance to ensure individual and prospective familial well being.

Poverty and the lure of a better quality of life have resulted in the persistence of illegal migration both intra-regionally and extra-regionally. As long as differentials and inequalities persist, illegal migration will continue, leading to elevated levels of vigilance in host countries. Such heightened levels of vigilance are likely to adversely affect the experiences of illegal migrants especially in labour markets in host countries. Often, such migrants face discrimination and exploitation because of their illegal status. Their illegal status may also place limitations on the magnitude of support they can provide to their dependent family members through remittances. The illegal status of migrant household heads is likely to have adverse effects upon family stability given that the prospect of family reunification is remote. There are also greater prospects of family disintegration which can be exacerbated when there is irregular or non-existent communication between the migrant and his/her family members. While the extent of illegal migration defies measurement and remains elusive, the persistence of poverty, relative deprivation and the quest for an enhanced quality of life will continue to sustain individual urges to migrate illegally.

Relative deprivation, inadequate social structures catering to the labour market needs of professional and highly skilled workers and a quest to enhance the quality of life of individuals and their families have been critical factors instrumental in stimulating legal migration from Central America and the Caribbean. Especially in the Caribbean, professionals such as teachers, health care workers and engineers have been recruited intra-regionally and extra-regionally during the 1990s. In countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, there have been attempts by relevant North Atlantic entities to recruit teachers and health care workers on contract for fixed periods. These contracts are usually temporary and subject to renewal after relatively short periods. They are usually found to be attractive by senior professionals in the public sector and in particular, those who are on the verge of retirement. Given the short-term character of such contracts and the social challenges associated with the relocation of family members, some migrants have opted to establish a temporary home in the host country while sustaining efforts to support their immediate familial homes in the Caribbean. Such overseas exposure enhances the capacity of migrants to earn competitive incomes and to make investments

that provide a basis for the sustenance of their families and assure their personal social protection as they retire.

Due to an acute shortage of professional skills some areas such as the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos and Bermuda, have recruited professional services within the Caribbean sub-region. Public servants such as teachers, health care workers, skilled technocrats and social workers have been recruited from countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St. Lucia and Jamaica to offer professional services on the basis of contractual obligations for fixed periods with prospects of renewal. Such arrangements may have positive effects upon the well being of migrants' families through enhanced remuneration packages. At the same time, they also contribute to some amount of social disruption if family members either live apart or opt for migrating and establishing a temporary or in some instances, a quasi-permanent home in locales that are alien to them.

Tourism is an engine of growth in many places like the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, St. Maarten and the United States Virgin Islands, and the stimulus that has attracted migrants from neighbouring islands. In such cases, migrants are predominantly females, some of whom may have children who are left behind in home countries to live in extended family settings. Intra-regional streams of migration had significantly larger proportions of adults aged 19 to 35 years when compared to children. This suggests that the vast majority of intra-regional migrants may have been childless or migrated without their children (Mills 1997).

Prior to the 1980s, migration between Central America and the United States mainly involved migrants from Mexico. Later, however, there were migratory waves from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, mainly due to the outbreak of civil wars and natural disasters in those countries. Numerous families sought asylum not only in the United States but also in Mexico. Mexico remains the major source of emigrants destined to the United States. During the 1990s, the establishment of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) had a negative effect on Mexican farmers and an increased desire to migrate to the United States in search of work. Upon election in 2000, the Mexican President Vicente Fox remarked that Mexicans in the United States remitted nearly US$7 billion annually to their families.

There is a great likelihood that formal migration between Mexico and the United States and Canada will intensify beyond 2003 as a result of NAFTA agreements that permit the free movement of professional services among the three countries. Provision is made for 64 categories of professionals including accountants, engineers and lawyers to cross borders with their families and work providing they could present evidence of a job offer, professional credentials and a passport at the respective borders.

Since migratory decisions hinge upon the needs of individuals to strive for a better quality of life, they are likely to impact upon a variety of social and economic attributes that determine the well being of families. In general, the decision to weigh options of migrating has to be considered by individuals who often are the primary breadwinners in their families. In Central America and the Caribbean, families have been disrupted due to

economic necessity and the fact that breadwinners have little choice but to explore opportunities of seeking work overseas. Such actions have largely been due to a set of structural factors such as persistent poverty, surplus labour particularly in unskilled areas and relative deprivation especially from the standpoint of professionals and highly skilled workers.

Migration has often been considered a "safety valve" for Caribbean societies, relieving them of the ills associated with rapid population growth concomitant with inadequate resources to optimally meet their needs. Such a notion may also apply in the context of Central American and Caribbean countries. Through remittances, these societies benefit from the gainful unemployment of persons who, had it not been for migratory movements, would have been unemployed or under-employed. The impact of such benefits have been so profound that the governments of Mexico and Honduras sought bilateral arrangements with the government of the United States to sustain mechanisms that will guarantee steady returns to families - and hence the respective economies - through remittances.

Demographic Ageing

For Central America and the Caribbean, demographic ageing - the increasing prevalence of older persons in a population - is assessed in terms of the proportion of countries' populations aged 65 years and over, the median age of populations and the ageing index. These indicators are presented in Table 4 and Table 5. Caribbean countries appear to be older on average compared to those of Central America. In Central America, the process of ageing appears to be most pronounced in Costa Rica, Panama and to a slightly lesser extent, Mexico. In these Central American countries, the observed pattern is similar to that observed for the majority of Caribbean countries. Patterns of ageing in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are similar to those observed for the majority of Central American countries, in particular, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Cuba, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica display a pronounced process of ageing.

In the Caribbean, ageing has gained momentum due to declining fertility levels, increased longevity and a growing trend of return migration involving older Caribbean natives who return upon retirement. From the standpoint of health, education and training, income earning activities and public safety, the ageing of societies suggests that attention has to be given to addressing the needs of older persons. Often, social security provisions and in particular pension funds are non-existent or inadequate to meet the needs of older persons often because they had not made contributions. In this regard, elderly women are particularly disadvantaged, as many have never been in the labour force and were largely dependent on the incomes and contributions of their spouses, partners or other dependents. The role of the state in the context of the elderly can be charted as follows:

> *……the State is faced with the greater demands that an ageing population places on health and pension systems and must respond to social tensions associated with the*

> *financial needs of these systems, changes in intergenerational relations of economic dependency and greater competition for jobs.* (ECLAC 2000)

Since increased ageing is likely to characterize Central American and Caribbean societies in the coming years, consideration has to be given to emergent living arrangements as they will be critical in enabling societies to overcome challenges associated with personal health, retirement of persons from gainful employment and access to social security.

With respect to living arrangements, the future status of older persons has to be examined in relation to gender differentials in life expectancy, differentials in the ages of spouses and partners, declining fertility levels, increasing levels of female labour force participation, increases in the prevalence of divorce and separation and higher remarriage rates among men. In general, females outlive their spouses and partners and this is compounded by that fact that in most instances, women are younger than their spouses and partners. Thus, it is likely that greater proportions of older women will be living alone. Moreover, their current levels of participation in the labour force has been greater than those of earlier generations of women thereby bestowing upon them greater levels of independence, self reliance and access to social security provisions deemed necessary to sustain their needs for food, shelter and health care. Older women, however, who were less fortunate of acquiring the means to secure their independence and spent their life living in poverty are among the most vulnerable and every effort should be made to cater to their needs.

In urban areas in Central America, in 1997, older persons (aged 60 years and over) living alone were predominantly women, except in Panama, where the proportion was estimated to be 47.1 per cent (ECLAC 2002). In rural areas, however, older persons living alone were predominantly men, except in Mexico. Older women were more frequently found in multi-generational households especially in situations where they contributed less than 25 per cent of the household income. This indicates women's lifetime exclusion from the labour force and their lower income earning capacity when compared to men. In urban areas of Central America, in 2000, at least 80 percent of all older persons lived in multi-generational households, where at least half of them contributed less than a quarter of the total household income. This was particularly true in Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador where urban poverty levels were found to be high. In cases where older adults contributed more than 50 per cent of the total household income, the prevalence of multi-generational households is likely to be an indicator of poverty among younger generations, principally children and grand-children who seek refuge in the home of an older parent or parents.

In the Caribbean, there has traditionally been evidence of multi-generational households with older adults. In many lower class Afro-Caribbean families, elderly females are deemed to be central figures in multi-generational households, whether or not male household heads are present (Clarke, 1957; Smith, 1956; Smith, 1962; and Rodman, 1971). Such multi-generational households have been labeled "matrifocal" and bestow considerable power and influence upon older women who, in a very symbolic way,

permit families to satisfy their inherent functions. The essence of such families are best captured as follows:

> *Within lower class households, women have often been identified as the prime movers in terms of ensuring the well being of family units. Grand-mothers, for example, have assumed and continue to assume important roles in households which are usually occupied by their daughters and grand-children. In many cases, paternal figures are non-existent and suggest that grand-mothers and their daughters have full responsibility for home duties, childcare and the generation of household income. In addition to wages and salaries that are likely to be modest and consistent with the educational and labour force characteristics of the majority of these women, household income may be supplemented through remittances, government transfers and old age pensions (St. Bernard, 1997b).*

Multi-generational households are also evident in Indo-Caribbean families in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago. In such settings, however, patriarchal traditions prevail with older men and their adult sons or male kin wielding considerable power and influence. Generally, such families consist of older men, their wives, children and grandchildren living together in a socio-cultural setting that provides protection and other routine functions to all members. Whether from the standpoint of Indo-Caribbean or lower class Afro-Caribbean families, these traditional multi-generational household systems still persist in contemporary Caribbean societies and are likely to be retained in specific social enclaves.

There has been a paucity of social surveys throwing light upon living arrangements in Caribbean societies during the 1990s. However, in Trinidad and Tobago, estimates derived from the 1994 National Survey of Family Life indicate that about 22 per cent of all households had at least one older person (aged 65 years and over) (St. Bernard, 1997a). With respect to all households with older persons, the estimates indicate that the majority (42 per cent) were extended family households while 21 per cent consisted of persons living alone. In Anglophone Caribbean countries, the concentration of single person households with older persons is consistent with the concentration of older persons in the respective populations (St. Bernard 2001). As current trends indicate increases in the proportion of older persons in Caribbean populations, it is also likely that there will be corresponding increases in the concentration of single person households with older persons. Such outcomes appear to be logical as older persons are not only more likely to lose children through marriage and migration but they are also more likely to have lost spouses or partners through the different forms of union dissolution including death. In contrast, younger persons living alone are more likely to initiate or reenter unions or become parents. In the event that there are increases in the proportion of older persons living alone, there ought to be concern over their ability to access support to

overcome health-related challenges or attain satisfactory living standards. In essence, policy will need to monitor the status of future generations of single person households with a view towards detecting the extent to which they face difficult circumstances and where it is necessary to intervene to improve their livelihood.

Whether in Central America or in the Caribbean, the majority of older persons live with other individuals in household settings. This means that older persons are in positions where their social, emotional and physical needs can potentially be supported by other relatives and where they can provide such support to other members of their families. Older relatives can educate and socialize young family members through a process of intergenerational exchanges that provide a systematic basis for continuity. Such intergenerational exchanges are also instrumental in promoting mutual respect and transcending stereotypes. In societies and sub-cultures where antagonisms persist across the age divide, mechanisms to promote intergenerational exchanges are less likely to be effective. This means that there is a constant need to monitor the nature of the living arrangements of older persons.

The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Central America and the Caribbean is second only to that of Sub-Saharan Africa. The available data suggest that there have been a relatively greater number of cases in selected Caribbean countries than in Central American countries (Table 11), although prevalence rates vary greatly among countries. Belize, Honduras, Panama and Guatemala have the highest rates in Central America while countries such as Haiti, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago have some of the highest rates in the Caribbean. The variable patterns of HIV/AIDS prevalence observed across the region are likely to be a function of variations in sexual behaviour. In Central America and the Caribbean, patterns of sexual behaviour include early initiation of sexual activity, the cultural acceptability of multiple partners especially for males and low levels of condom use, all of which expose sexually active residents to higher risks of exposure to HIV/AIDS.

During the 1990s, Honduras, for example, accounted for about 57 per cent of the HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed in Central America despite having only 17 per cent of the Sub-Region's population. In Honduras, levels of HIV seroprevalence among sex workers were as high as 40 per cent as opposed to 11 per cent in the Dominican Republic (AIDSCAP/Harvard School of Public Health/UNAIDS, 1996). Haiti is recognized as a place where the epidemic has attained maturity and where prevalence has been particularly high among sex workers. In the Anglophone Caribbean, HIV/AIDS is spread primarily through heterosexual contact with phenomenal increases in prevalence being registered among persons aged 15-44 years and in particular among females aged 15-19 years. Sentinel surveillance data point towards increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence among pregnant women, sex workers and migrant farm workers in some Caribbean countries (AIDSCAP et al 1996).

The social impact of AIDS can be examined at three levels - individual, family and society. In 19 member countries served by the Caribbean Epidemiological Centre (CAREC), the majority of cases (78.2 per cent) were persons aged 20-44 years. Contracting HIV/AIDS was associated with fear of infection and disclosure, stigmatization, isolation, discrimination and changes in parental roles (Francis 1993). At the societal level, there is likely to be a proliferation of homeless street people, orphans and nutritional deficiencies as a result of HIV/AIDS. In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, Gittens (1993) alluded to a similar set of familial and societal problems and noted that there was a demand for counseling services, hospices, homes for orphans and financial assistance to meet basic needs including, medication. Brandon and Brown (2000) also referred to the difficulty faced by HIV positive persons and their families with respect to living normal lives citing a number of problems such as loss of friends, family and even their livelihood.

Despite substantial variability in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS across Central American and Caribbean countries, specific facets of the region's economy and culture have been instrumental in the spread of HIV/AIDS. These include tourism, migrant farm workers, sex work as a means of securing a livelihood, sexual encounters with multiple partners and low levels of condom use. Poverty often leads people into risky situations connected with tourism, migrant farm work and possible resort to sex work, as means of earning a living. Despite the fact that HIV/AIDS has afflicted individuals irrespective of their social class, steps geared toward the reduction of poverty may contribute significantly to altering the economic pursuits of workers and reducing their exposure to contracting HIV/AIDS. Countries have embraced programmes to stimulate knowledge, awareness and best practice to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the Caribbean, the "Guideline for the Clinical Management of HIV Infection in Adults and Children" produced by CAREC in 1994 constitutes such an initiative (Lewis et al, 1997).

At best, current assessments of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS are based on reported cases that underestimate the magnitude of the pandemic. To this end, there is bound to be some level of uncertainty about prospective patterns of incidence despite recent pronouncements of declining levels in Barbados and the Bahamas. In the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, awareness, knowledge, acknowledgement of the severity of AIDS, a willingness to prevent its spread and adoption of preventive steps are the best weapons available to countries to limit and arrest the spread of the disease. With respect to each of these dimensions, however, the different countries are at different levels and have demonstrated variable capacities to stimulate action in meaningful ways. Within countries, there is a need to bridge differentials predicated upon education and place of residence. Table 22 shows urban-rural differentials in awareness of AIDS in four Central American and Caribbean countries and is indicative of cross-country and intra-country differentials in levels of awareness. Specifically, there are substantially lower levels of awareness in Guatemala compared to Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Moreover, there is evidence of substantial urban-rural differentials in Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Given that awareness is a precursor to substantive knowledge for responding effectively and reducing risks of exposure to HIV/AIDS, the relatively lower levels of awareness in Guatemala and Nicaragua are of considerable concern. The observed levels of awareness in Guatemala and Nicaragua should reinforce the need for action to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS in spite of the relatively low prevalence rates observed in the two countries at the beginning of the new millennium (Table 11). Throughout the region, prevalence of HIV/AIDS is most highly concentrated among persons aged 15-44 years. Collectively, these individuals are young adults, mature adults in the prime of their lives and parents of children. This may result in increases in the number of women and by extension, children becoming HIV positive due mainly to contagion as a result of heterosexual contacts.

In Caribbean societies, there have been numerous instances in which single mothers have been known to sustain relationships with multiple partners primarily for economic reasons. Such relationships have often been predicated upon a life of poverty. They predispose such women to risky practices that expose them to the disease. In such situations, the men are known to wield considerable power over decisions surrounding sex and often times, coerce women into having unprotected sex. This is a common practice in Anglophone Caribbean societies and has partly been responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS among young persons, especially women. There have to be further thrusts to capitalize upon gains that have been made in erasing the stigma and discrimination experienced by HIV positive persons within their families and at the community level. Notwithstanding the laudable efforts to combat inherent threats, persons living with HIV/AIDS continue to live in communities and new cases will join them. This means that, communities and families have to keep abreast of the changing demographics of persons living with HIV/AIDS in order to care for them and their dependents.

In virtually every country in Central America and the Caribbean, children have become orphans due to the deaths of their parents as a result of HIV/AIDS. In most of the countries, there were fewer than a thousand orphans (Table 11). However, there have been as many as 49,000 in Haiti and 7,000 in the Dominican Republic. Though large in absolute numbers, the rate of orphanhood in Central America is much smaller than that in the Caribbean. Several orphans live within communities and among relatives and may have to deal with discrimination and other negative feedback that are associated with HIV/AIDS. This is compounded if the child has also been found to be HIV positive. In Trinidad and Tobago, the St. Vincent de Paul Society has established a home for children who have either been orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS or who may actually be HIV positive. This is consistent with the kind of home-based care that has been established in other countries such as Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica (Brandon and Brown, 2000). The different arms of civil society have a role to play by embracing similar models of home-based care for children. Whether in domestic familial settings or in hospices, current efforts should be intensified to empower families and communities to provide emotional, dietary and economic support to adults living with HIV/AIDS. In addition to the care provided to young and mature adults, special provisions will have to be made to cater to the needs of a growing number of older adults with HIV/AIDS. This is likely to be a function of the ageing of those persons who are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

The Impact of Globalization

Globalization is a process that is reshaping international and intra-national relations. While it is not a new phenomenon, the configuration of globalization processes continues to assume different forms over time. Essentially, globalization has the effect of expanding the extent of openness that is characteristic of a given nation or territory. The establishment of various inter-governmental agreements and trade blocks could be considered mechanisms that promote and intensify globalization. Increasingly, societal institutions are affected by forces that have their roots in other institutional arrangements, in different national settings. Through the process of globalization, traditional cultural vestiges may be overtaken by dominant cultural symbols and artifacts that have their roots in other countries. Sometimes, there might be an eclectic mix that permits symbols and artifacts to thrive side by side or in competition with one another. In Central America and the Caribbean, globalization impacts upon families through tourism, the electronic media, and agreements arising out of regional integration initiatives.

In the air travel industry, recent international developments have intensified the competition between airlines. In addition, the growing threat of terrorism has increased the cost of air travel and instilled fear among passengers resulting in reductions in air passenger traffic. Such reductions have been of tremendous concern to the governments of countries with economies that thrive on tourism. Given the significance of tourism to the economies of these countries, any reductions in tourist visits are bound to adversely affect their potential returns and income generated. This is further intensified when countries compete among themselves and with other regional destinations for a smaller share of the global market. In the Caribbean, tourism provides employment for considerable numbers of unskilled persons, particularly women. Thus, reductions in air passenger traffic due primarily to global forces result in reductions in income and employment prospects for artisans, ground transport workers, employees in restaurants, merchants in souvenir shops and entertainment workers. Since such workers are often heads of families or the sole breadwinners, reductions in income and employment prospects are tantamount to reductions in their standard of living. In the aftermath of the events associated with September 11 and with the onset of hostilities in the Middle East, the ills associated with reductions in passenger traffic may intensify further with all of the negative implications for families. In such cases, reduced incomes and increased levels of unemployment among family heads will result in greater levels of stress and threaten the well being of families dependent upon earnings from tourism.

The electronic media and in particular, television, have become commonplace in households throughout the Caribbean. Since the advent of cable television and direct television, Caribbean populations have been exposed to a standard set of television programming that is indicative of lifestyles and living arrangements in the North Atlantic. Although television as a medium of communication and entertainment came of age in the last half of the twentieth century, cable and direct television came to the fore in the 1980s and gained prominence during the 1990s. Such developments have impacted upon some traditional family functions such as education and socialization. Television has increasingly provided information and values, often times sending mixed messages to

individuals who have to conduct their lives in extremely different cultural settings. There is also the notion that spouses, partners, parents and children have been spending less "quality time" together. Instead of traditional family conferences that bring family members closer to one another, the television has become an additional "family member" that attracts the attention of various members and in several instances, pit them against one another. There have been allegations linking the quality and content of television programming to "anomie" in several Caribbean societies. In particular, growing levels of juvenile delinquency, especially in schools, have been linked to children's exposure to television and aspects of foreign culture that are alien to the Caribbean. During the 1990s, the electronic age revolutionized global communications and these developments are likely to intensify constituting another source of alienation within the family.

Global trends have impacted on labour markets internationally and have spawned change in productive processes across Central America and the Caribbean. Increasingly, male and female family members are spending longer hours away from home pursuing work-related activities. Given changes in family structures, it has become difficult to obtain supervision for children, many of whom, have to be cared for by strangers in the absence of their parents. In other cases, especially in poor communities, children may be left unsupervised and exposed to deviant activities including juvenile offences and teenage sexual activities. Regional agreements have fostered greater levels of integration in the Caribbean and across Central America. Within the Caribbean, there has been a thrust towards the free movement of labour. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has openly expressed his desire to implement the process among member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. This also has implications for the movement of families across regional borders. On the downside, it also has the effect of further dislocating families, as employment obligations will increase the mobility of labour across borders for variable periods. Increased mobility may exacerbate xenophobic tendencies that thwart relationships between citizens and migrant families across the region.

Concluding Remarks

This paper examined trends affecting families in Central America and the Caribbean from the standpoint of recent developments and their prospective implications for the region. The countries of the two sub-regions vary greatly in terms of population and physical sizes, and such variability appears to be associated with observed attributes of development that are in turn associated with the range of family dynamics.

Notwithstanding this variety of situations, in general, fertility levels have been declining throughout the region though at a faster rate in the Caribbean than in Central America. A considerable number of Caribbean countries have already attained replacement level fertility and a few more are likely to do so soon. The region has witnessed greater educational advancement among females, higher level of female participation in the labour force and an overall trend towards urbanization, all of which is characteristic of developmental tendencies that are likely to inhibit the number of children that women and couples seek and overall fertility levels. This, therefore, has been considered one of

the factors contributing towards overall declines in household size. There is also evidence to suggest that demographic ageing is much more pronounced in the Caribbean than in Central America. This is a second factor that could be responsible for reductions in the size of households as there are likely to be increases in the proportions of older persons living alone. Poverty abounds in a number of Caribbean and Central American countries - though more so in Central America than in the Caribbean - and is partly responsible for migratory moves that have mixed implications for familial well being. On the upside, there have been significant benefits delivered by families through remittances from abroad. On the downside, the prospects of dissolution and difficult circumstances loom in cases where family members migrate and remain abroad – sometimes illegally - to secure a livelihood.

Poverty is also a critical factor in evaluating the link between the HIV/AIDS pandemic and family dynamics in the Caribbean and Central America. Due to poverty, some young women, who are often single mothers, engage in prostitution and sexual relationships with multiple partners thereby exposing themselves and their offspring to the risk of HIV infection. This is further compounded by the "machismo" image of male dominance in sexual relationships in Caribbean and Central American societies. There are also "inter-country" and "intra-country" differentials in awareness, knowledge, acknowledgement of the severity of AIDS, willingness to prevent its spread and adoption of preventive steps as critical factor in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Particular sub-populations are at the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and this can have substantial negative outcomes from the standpoint of families. Families are also likely to be affected by the process of globalization. In this regard, the primary focus should be on the impact of globalization on the family with respect to trends in tourism, the electronic revolution and implications for communications, work and productive enterprise and agreements to promote regional integration.

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