

## Urban Informal Sector. The case of Child Domestic Work in Guatemala City

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### Introduction

The situation of the working children in Latin America has been the focus of increased attention the last decade considering that it is a growing and more visible phenomenon.

In the specific area of employment in the Urban Informal Sector, working children represent a substantial part of the working force. Nevertheless and even though their growing presence in the working force, children are not included in the working force statistics, precisely because they are children. Even in development studies the tendency has been to not take into account the contribution children's work has for their household economies and how it many times impact directly on the children's own living conditions. (Aragão Lagergren, A). In general, the norm has been to minimize the importance of working children and many times even to deny it with moral norms and views on childhood belonging to a middle/high class that is not representative to the reality of the working children.

An important step towards a more serious and objective discussion on the working children's situation and recognition of the value of child work, has been the International Labour Organization, (ILO) Convention on the Worse Forms of Child Work from 1999. Contrary to the earlier conventions that are based on a legal approach banning all forms of child labour, and taking into account the poor results of those legal measures in stopping children from working, this new convention is based on the cruel truth that today it's impossible to eradicate all kinds of child work and in the light of this the best strategy is to concentrate on the worst and most intolerable forms of child work.

### Domestic work in private homes

According to that convention, Anti-Slavery International and Save the Children, the domestic work in private homes is classified as one of the worst forms of child work and the one that most of all hold back the fundamental development of the girl or boy

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engaged in it. In certain cases and societies, the conditions of the working children in the domestic work exceed the traditional notions of servitude to border on the line of slavery. At the same time, and due to its informal nature and to the location –private households- child domestic work is very difficult to study because of its inaccessibility. It is an invisible work because it consists of tasks traditionally not seen as work or as an economic activity. It is a hidden kind of work, because it takes place behind the closed doors of private homes which are very hard to access. It is a work that deprives the workers of more Human Rights. Under the perspective of sexual division of labour, it is the most oppressed, least regulated and most neglected occupation of the working class. The whole idea of this kind of work is tightly associated with the sphere of the home, where the household work is seen as indisputably inherent to women. Being placed in a home other than your own to perform the same tasks, that work, even though paid, is still despised as a continuation on the work done at home and very often exploited when it comes to working hours and payment. The relationship between the maid and the employer within the sphere of the household of the employer is a relationship where the line between the private and the professional is more or less diffused depending on the interests of the person with the power, the employer. This relation of power and sub ordinance is turned even more problematic when the issue of ethnicity is taken into account, as in many societies in Latin America where a high percentage of the maids belong to diverse ethnic groups with very little political, economical or social power in their countries.

In the case of child domestic workers, they are deprived not only of the rights inherent to every individual but also a whole series of the rights of every child. The children in their subordinate position in relation with adults are even more exposed to a situation of exploitation and abuse as domestic workers.

While there is a lack of scientific information on the living conditions of this group of children, it is estimated that after work in agriculture, domestic work is the most common form of child work. Domestic work is the largest individual employer of girls according to UNICEF and ILO, on a global level 90% of child domestic work is done by girls.

In Latin America and the Caribbean domestic work is one of the largest employment sectors for women. Even though it is invisible because of its characteristics, it is not invisible socially because we all see it and live with it everyday. According to censuses and surveys on work force, it represents 20 % of the total paid female work, this number is very underestimated considering all the working women who are not included by the statistical methods. Depending on the country this percentage would range from one fifth to one third of the paid work performed by women. If you add to that figure the number of girls and under aged children engaged in that occupation, the percentage would be even higher. In Guatemala, according to official statistics, it is estimated that 82% of all girls and children younger than 18 years of age that work, work as domestic workers<sup>2</sup>.

Considering the representativeness of the paid domestic work in the area of female adult and child employment, the investigations are not as many as one would expect. When it comes to the study of child domestic work specifically it is surprising to note the lack of interest the subject has provoked not only among scientists in general but also in feministic studies in particular. Taking in account that in the case of Latin America, with some exceptions, the domestic child labor is performed by girls, such a lack of interest is surprising. The gender and power relations start to take form precisely during childhood and girls who are domestic workers have to be seen as a specially exposed group to the

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<sup>2</sup> INE: 1989

reproduction of those conditions, both as girls and as workers.

### Children who work as domestic workers in the city of Guatemala

This paper presents partial results of a study conducted on a group of girls from Guatemala who work as domestic workers in the capital city of Guatemala. It is part of an extensive comparative study of the living conditions of girls who work as domestic workers in three cities in Guatemala: the capital Guatemala City, the second largest city Quetzaltenango and Cobán.

The general framework of the study is the Convention on the Rights of the Child that has served as the base for the analysis of the working children's living conditions. The perspective of gender has been the instrument for the analysis of the girls working conditions and for the relationship between worker and employer. All the girls who participated in this study belong to various ethnic Maya groups of the country, whom represent more than half the population of Guatemala and that generally are called *indigenas* (indigenous).

Seen from the methodological point of view this study has been a challenge because it handles a population whose work takes place behind private doors. Therefore a combined strategy with the purpose of succeeding in contacting the girls had to be used. In that strategy, Casa San Benito and the Proyecto Conrado de la Cruz in the capital played a vital part, firstly through their staff in the approach of the working girls in public spaces, for the realization of the surveys. Secondly by letting me use their amenities and quarters during long periods of time, for the familiarization with the girls in face of interviews and conversations with them. A very important factor to keep in mind is the fact that the girls only have on free day, or in some cases one and a half day, per week which means that it takes a very long time to establish a relationship based on trust with the girls.

The Guatemala City study particularly is based on in first hand the information gathered through surveys with 250 informants and a series of in depth interviews with a total of 38 working girls from the capital. The survey was made in public places: Central Park and La Aurora Zoological Park, in a random way mostly seeking to interview underage girls. Nevertheless, the intention also was to include youngsters to obtain a broader perspective on their life stories. The final results of the survey with 250 domestic workers include almost 80% percent girls between 12 and 17 years of age and the rest, between 18 and 23 years of age.

The in depth interviews were made with girls between the ages of 11 and 17, under private situations in locations provided by the NGO previously mentioned, that supported the study. The reason for the survey was to get information on the quantitative and general data about the origin of the girls, type of socio-economic household of their families at their place of origin, working career, the socio-economic strata of the district (zona) and household where they worked and so on.

The interviews were designed around the central themes of the investigation, in other words, information about the working and living conditions of the girls, within the framework of the Human Rights, and the rights of the child, the mapping of the urban child domestic work and the mechanisms behind the recruitment of the girls.

Methodological, in this study, like in other studies I have been involved with, the working children are the main source of information. My firm position when selecting this method, known as *child-centred*, is that no one better than the children themselves can tell us about their experiences, conditions of life and aspirations.

### Attitudes and discourses about child domestic work in Guatemala

In Guatemala the phenomenon of child domestic work does not seem to be questioned, maybe because it is so widespread in the households in the urban sectors. It is so normal to employ children and young girls from the ethnical Mayan groups to work as maids, normally *puertas a dentro*<sup>3</sup>, that the general attitude is that of acceptance. That acceptance is a result of a culture of servitude that continues to justify relations of exploitation by a group, historically with more political and economical power, towards a group deprived of that power. Currently this culture has been passed on to all the population sectors in the city and is reciprocally accepted by the one who is served and the one who is the servant. Also, and in accordance to other studies about this kind of child work in other parts of Latin America, it is more often seen as act of kindness towards the girl and her family; an way of helping against the poverty that affects the poor rural families that in Guatemala are, in majority, of Mayan population. Also the girls' families are thankful for this opportunity of work. Therefore, many times this work is unpaid, and is performed in exchange of food and housing.

In the discourse about child domestic work, poverty, in the households in rural areas, is usually the foremost reason for the expulsion of the girls to the capital. The simplified relationship between poverty in the rural households and the urban domestic work performed by girls is the result of a paternalistic attitude towards the girl that in its self is a reproduction of the paternalistic values that prevail in the Guatemalan society. The woman is deprived of any active part in decision making that affects her own life; in the case of the under aged working girl, the acceptance of the subordinate position of the girl in relation to the adults, her parents and her "patrona" employer, is even more obvious. The girl is hypothetically deprived not only of the power to make her own decisions but also of the fact of being an individual with her own will. Therefore, the dominating idea is that it is the parents who send their daughters to the capital to work with the goal of contributing to the household economy. In that context the labor of the girls is considered as a part of the *survival strategies* of the family unit and the decision of her entry into the working force, a decision made by her family/household.

On the other hand, and as part of the discourse on the recruitment of the girls, even that no proof has been found of it, it is suspected that there exists an organized network of child recruiters that allegedly travels to the more remote areas of the country to convince the parents of the girls to let their daughters travel to the capital with the promise of domestic work in private homes of their knowledge. This idea is viewed with great concern by the NGOs that are engaged in work on the situation of the children and therefore it is a subject that was explored in this study.

In this paper I tried to focus on these aspects – reasons why the girls started to work, decision making processes that led to leaving towards the capital and recruitment mechanisms – within the context of non-accompanied child migration.

The domestic work in the home of a third party is clearly linked to the migration and processes of urbanization not only in Central America. The internal and international migration of female adults is a growing phenomenon at a global level and the focus of a growing scientific interest. A great part of the emigrating women emigrate with the purpose of working as domestic workers. About the non-accompanied child migration there is not much known. Always when we hear of cases of children that have "migrated"

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<sup>3</sup> *Puertas a dentro* is a term which means when the domestic worker live permanently in the household where she works.

they are usually presented as offers of trafficking, sold as domestic workers in a state of implicit slavery. Even though there are indices pointing to the migration of girls and boys in certain parts of the world, this is an area where very little scientific study has been made.

In this study, the girls and youngsters are internal economic migrants per definition, who migrate towards the capital with the goal of working in the informal urban sector as domestic workers. In this context it is important to know from what origin these girls are and their ethnical belonging on one hand, and on the other hand in which types of households and areas of the city they work in order to be able to define the socio-economic pattern of the child domestic work in the city of Guatemala.

### Who are these girls? Their own accounts

Information on the birth place and living place where the girls lived before they migrated coincided in almost all cases. That information showed that the girls came from fifteen regions (*Departamentos*) of former armed conflict and that presently are going through a period of economic stagnation and deep poverty. It is important to notice that almost half of the interviewed girls come from San Marcos, followed by Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, el Quiché, Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz. They came from a total of 99 municipalities of those *Departamentos*, with a special high incidence from Concepción Tutuapa and Momostenango. These regions are included in the poverty mapping of Guatemala in which and in accordance to official statistics, the percentage of the households in the North, Northeast and Northwest parts of the country between 63 and 69 percent live in poverty and between 87 and 51 percent of them in conditions of extreme poverty. It is also there the larger concentration of rural youth is found with more than 75 percent of the population and with ages between 15 and 19 years old, Mayan and women. (Poitevin, R., Rivera, A., Moscoso, V.).

It is from this group that the large amount of migrants towards the South coast, the capital and other urban centers emerge. How many children younger than 15 years old migrate is not reflected in that report or in other official statistics because they do not include children.

The 6.5% of the girls in this study were between 6 and 9 years old when they started their first job in the capital and one third of the total were between 11 and 13 years. That means that in almost half of the cases the girls were so young that they were not included in any statistics, at the same time they represent an important sector of those who migrate to the capital. We are obviously facing a situation of female child non-accompanied emigration that because it is not visible in the statistics, is not known nor taken into consideration in the plans of social-economic development, in general or in specific for the children and youth of Guatemala.

The idea of the breakdown of the households and disintegration of the family in Guatemala due to the situation of internal armed conflict that the country has been through and the following displacement of population groups, in general Mayan people, towards other regions and Mexico, and more recently the return of the exiled families from Mexico, mainly, has been the topic of debates regarding the impact it might have on the process of urbanization of the country, still largely under the average urbanization index of Latin America. In this context, it has been spread the idea that the girls who work as domestic servants come mainly from homes with especially difficult situations and from disintegrated families. The results of this study show that this is not the truth of the situation in the households and families of origin of these girls. On contrary and

with the exception of the 4%, - families where the head of the household is the mother – the girls come from nuclear families with an average of 8 children, many of them under aged, with some families having as many as 12 children. Also the number of girls that come from extended families – only three – goes against the idea of a process of family reconstruction in post conflict Guatemala. In reality the girls and youngsters migrants came from families with a father and mother, and not from situations of abandonment and lack of family protection.

This is not to say that just because they make part of a nuclear family, the living conditions of the girls are from start good in terms of basic rights and “integral” development. Analyzing the mother’ and the fathers’ occupation it becomes easier to form an idea of the condition of life of the girls’ family: the dominating type of work for the mothers was house wife and 25% worked in agriculture. Only 3% were dedicated to commerce. The father’s occupation follows an identical structure and it was in agriculture where they were active, in over half of the cases they were rural worker with own plot and in 20% of the cases they were paid rural worker. Only 5% worked with their own small-scale business. Observe that 4% of the fathers were put up as unemployed and when asked from what profession, they had worked as paid rural workers in large scale export farms. Even though the number of open unemployment is in fact low, it does not represent the reality of the living conditions of those families considering that the occupations to which they are dedicated are of no or very low investment of capital and oriented towards an informal economy of subsistence. Arts craft appeared in many cases as a secondary activity and source of income, but in 7% of the cases it was given as the primary occupation of the mother and father.

*- Why do children travel to the capital to work?*

The condition of poverty in the girls’ households of origin is without any doubt the primary reason for the expulsion. Nevertheless, only poverty can not in itself give an explanation integral of such a complex process where children and young girls from rural areas, travel to the capital to be integrated into the urban working force. If that was the case, there would not be any girls left in the rural areas of Guatemala. Necessarily there must be other factors that impel the child labor migration. In this context it was very important to get to know from the girls what the reasons were in each case to why they migrated and how the decision to leave was made.

In the survey and because of the characteristics of the same, the reasons given were in general of economical type: *I wanted to have my own money to be able to buy my own things* and *I wanted to help my parents*, were the reasons most often given. Often these answers were complemented with: *I didn't like the life in the village or the work at home and on the fields was too hard* or even *the school was not good there*.

In the in depth interviews the girls had the opportunity to talk in depth about the process that took place before leaving the family and in that way talk about the reasons of why they left to work in the capital. The stories give us the idea that on one hand, the girl without any doubt felt as part of a family where the unity was important and the solidarity for the maintenance of a minimum of life quality. Nevertheless the girl often felt a great responsibility in helping with the duties in the field, and in the household including taking care of her siblings, even her older brothers, holding back her own schooling and independence. Many of the girls expressed their frustrations with having to go to school without having the possibility to do their chores because of the heavy load of work at home, to finally quit studying.

In some cases the accounts told of situations of physical and mental abuse towards the girls and other siblings associated with the alcoholism of one of the parents, in a couple of cases the mother. In the case of the mother being alcoholic the working load and responsibility of the girl would be even greater augmenting the wish to leave home. In general the descriptions give the idea of a hard life where work occupies most of the time since an early age. Also, the lack of enough food during certain periods of time was mentioned as a factor of stress in the ambient of the home.

As much of the surveys as of the interviews, surged the information that in some cases, the girl already was employed in domestic work in a third party home at her place of origin, or as a helping hand in a store or as a rural worker, before leaving for the capital. In these cases the work was not on a paid basis but in exchange for food, mainly maize or beans.

Additionally the fear of early age marriage was given by many girls as the decisive reason for leaving: they did not want to marry and have children as youngsters like their sisters, cousins, neighbors or friends. *I didn't want to get caught there the rest of my life*, said a 15 year old girl.

Finally the attraction of the city is visible on almost all the girls. Leave the village, see the city: *My friend had told me that there was a store that had a lot of stores and beautiful things...food, clothes, movies and I wanted to see it. I walked around thinking about it and how it would be. Then I came and the city is very beautiful.*

The dream of living in a house in the city was mentioned by many of the interviewed who described how small their houses back in the villages were. The desire of privacy was often expressed:

*I wanted to have a place to live with a real floor, a bed only for me, have my own things.*

The decision to leave for the city was taken by the girl herself according to more than half the surveys. *I came because I wanted too or one day I decided to leave or even no one told me to come, I wanted to myself.* The rest said they had decided together with their parents without giving any more information. Only 5% said that their parents had sent them to work through an acquaintance, adding some of the girls that they left against their own will, because they were afraid of the life in the city. Of the girls that said that they came to the capital because they themselves wanted too, one third were between 11 and 13 when they started working and the rest between 15 and 17. In two cases the girls were between 6 and 9 years of age when they left for the capital in the company of a friend to work as domestic baby sitting.

In the interviews the girls exposed the process of the decision to leave as a quite fast process, generally made by the girl herself, sometimes with the support of an older sister or cousin already employed in the city and many times against the will of the mother or father. One 13 year old girl said: *My dad didn't want me to leave. I had to leave one day with a friend without him noticing. He got very angry but he has come over it.*

Another girl 15 years old said: *I left when I was 11 years old against my parents will but I wanted to have my own money; over there, there was never enough money left to buy my things. We are so many siblings.*

These two questions – the reason for which they left home to work in the capital and the decision to leave – are related with the mode in which these girls found out about their first job as domestic servants, so to say their recruitment as workers. More than half of the girls in the survey tell that they found out about their first job through a cousin or a sister, who already were working in the city and told them about an available job. Nevertheless

many did not want to answer the questions relative to the subject answering that they did not know. The rest said that they were not directly informed or told about any jobs in the capital but were told from their mother or father who in turn was informed through a family friend or neighbor. In these cases there was a clear pattern of incidence in regard to the age the girl started working: in almost 40% of the cases, the girl was only between 6 and 9 years of age when she left home to work in the capital. With much reservation one can conclude that this result concerns the homes in extreme poverty where the leaving of a member of the family is not only a direct economical relief for the home but also an economic contribution through the income of the working girl.

In the conversations with the interviewed girls the question regarding the recruitment was discussed in detail. The common pattern to almost all the cases was that an older sister or cousin was already working in the capital, found her a job; a cousin was in charge of finding her a job and then told her. In some cases the girls found out about Casa San Benito through a sister/friend/cousin, and went by herself to the capital and there they helped her to find a lady where to work.

The subject of an organized network of recruiters who actively traveled to the remote parts of the country to recruit girls as domestic workers was thoroughly discussed in the interviews. In fact, none of the girls that took part in the study nor anyone that the girls knew had been recruited in this manner. They just mentioned of two cases where a woman and a man arrived at the village in search for a girl to go to work in the capital as a domestic worker, which does not mean that it has to be an example of organized recruitment of child domestic workers; it could as well be a case of private persons.

- *Who employs the children as domestic workers?*

In the general discourse over the child domestic work in the capital, the households belonging to the high and middle-high socio-economic strata are presented as the main employers of the indigenous children and youngsters as domestic workers. In that discourse, the question of ethnic group and working relations, between *ladinos*<sup>4</sup> economically more privileged and poor indigenous girls exploited by them, is the simplified image of the relationship employer-employee, which is more disclosed and commonly accepted as true.

In fact, the mapping of the households that employ girls shows that the child domestic labor exists in the entire city and is represented in all the urban socio-economic levels. The information about the place of work was carefully gathered through the surveys and the interviews. Not only was the location of the house in the city – area, neighborhood – where the girl worked gathered but also the standard of the house, number of rooms and bathrooms, the occurrence of machines and household electronics etc... Also, and even more important, if in the house there were other people working with household related tasks, chauffeur, gardener, maid or others. In that way the socio-economic mapping of the households where the girls work was established.

The results take us to the conclusion that child domestic work is a largely common phenomenon in Guatemala City and that the employers of the girls belong to all the socio-economic strata of the capital. One third of the girls also told that they worked in houses that had up to three other people employed, which means that this is about the incidence

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<sup>4</sup> In Guatemala it is common to speak about the *indigenous population* and the *ladino population*. Originally the term *ladino* was used to name the persons who were descendants of a Spaniard and a *mestizo*. At the present, it is used to name the non-indigenous population in general.

of child domestic workers in the middle high to high socio-economic strata. In most cases the girls worked alone as maids in the households of lower strata. The spatial pattern of employment includes pretty much all the zones of the city, with fewer occurrences in the more peripheral zones. The zones with the highest occurrence were the districts (zonas) 12, 15 and 1, closely followed by 11, 7 and 8. After this almost all the *zonas* of the city were represented which means that even the households from the low, medium – low, to medium – high, high socio-economic strata employ the girls. A dominating pattern of ladino employer households was not found. It was even equally normal for girls to work in indigenous households. This demonstrates that child domestic work is widespread regardless of ethnic relations of exploitation by a group with more social, economical and political power over another social, economical and political discriminated for its ethnical identity. When it comes to exploiting children and young girls as docile and cheap labor force, the question of ethnicity seem to be of less importance.

*- High occupational mobility among the children*

In studies regarding employment in the urban informal sector, labor mobility is customary used as an indicator of when, because of high supply within a certain branch, the worker change occupation with the goal of maximizing his income. In this study, information from the survey showed that the labor mobility of the girls was very low: in 4% of the cases, they had previously worked in a factory and in 15% of the cases in agriculture before beginning to work as domestic workers. Also in some cases the girls had worked as helpers of *tortilleras*<sup>5</sup> and at bars. Of the interviewed there were two girls, of 15 and 16 years, that told that they had started to work as domestic workers, to later on change to work at the industrial unit, but due to the bad conditions in that occupation they went back to domestic work. This information is in accordance with the results of other studies in the region about the lack of occupational options that the migrated women encounter in the capital.

On the other hand, the labor trajectory of the girls inside the occupation of domestic worker shows a high mobility between places of work – private homes – which was not to expect. The survey showed that about a third of the girls had worked in at least three houses during a period of two years before the survey, while 10% had worked in more than three houses. Of those, almost half the cases were girls between 11 and 14 years of age.

With the exception of four girls that were working in their first employment, the girls in the in-depth interviews had changed working place at least twice up to a number of five times. One 12 year old girl had changed place four times since she started to work at the age of 10. The reasons given by her were excessive work load in some cases and famine in others. *I used to wake up with a stomach ache from the hunger because I used to go to bed without eating much. In the morning I didn't eat until after serving the breakfast to the children and they had left for school. They only gave me tortillas and coffee; sometimes eggs. For lunch I didn't get the same food as they did. I left because I was always hungry.*

The situation of lack of food, too much fatigue due to the working load and little sleep, were the main reasons given for the change of working place. Also, many of the girls have on some occasion left the house in consequence of not getting paid after some months of promises of payment. *The lady told me that she would deposit my payment in a banc account. But I don't know anything about bancs or how it is done.*

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<sup>5</sup> *Tortilleras* are women who make the *tortilla* or a kind of maize bread which is part of the basis alimentation in Guatemala.

Of all the interviewed girls only three had ever been fired and always in connection with returning to their villages without the permission of the *lady*. *The lady gave me three free days to go home, but I returned one day late. When I returned there was already another girl working there so I left.* Told a 14 year old girl.

## Conclusions

The girls who work as domestic workers in the capital of Guatemala who took part in this study, all came from regions in Guatemala which were affected by the armed conflict and where poverty is very severe. In the whole they belong to diverse ethnic Mayan groups with K'iché, Mam and Kakchiquel being the most represented. In general they are bilingual being Spanish their second language, many times spoken with much difficulty. They use almost purely and with dignity the *corte* and the *huipil* the characteristic dresses from their place of origin and the symbol of their ethnic belonging.

These girls do not come from disintegrated families, but from numerous nuclear families where the mothers and fathers are engaged in subsistence agriculture or/and are seasonal rural workers. The living conditions of these girls at their place of origin are difficult due to a heavy working load, basic needs not being met and no schooling or schooling without success. Many of them were already workers outside of their homes before they migrated, and because of that they had a double working load since very young. In some cases, the family environment was unfavorable for the harmonic development of the girl due to alcoholism related situations of verbal and physical abuse. These factors together with the fear of premature marriage, and the wish to have an own economy were the reasons given for leaving toward the capital. The attraction for the city life was often mentioned by the girls and can be seen as an additional factor when making the decision to leave. That decision was made in the majority of times by the girls themselves and on contrary to what is commonly thought, they did not leave because their parents sent them to work. Many times the decision was made against the will of the parents and in some cases secretly.

Whatever the existence of organized groups for recruiting domestic working girls exist, this study did not give any indication of that being the case. It was through the friends and relatives, often cousins of the same age that the girls found out about their first job in the capital and that also helped them with their first trip. Generally the *intermediate* of the first job, so to say, the sister, cousin or friend, accompanied the girl on her first trip to the capital. Rarely was it one of the parents who accompanied the girl.

That the decision to migrate was taken by the girl and not as a decision of the household, from the perspective of a survival strategy of the rural poor households, has to be taken very seriously and can be interpreted in different ways. For me as a researcher, the reasons given by the girls are enough to justify such a valiant decision as leaving their family and go by themselves to work in a environment so unfamiliar as is the case of the capital city.

These conclusions, contradict several aspects of the dominant discourse about child domestic work in Guatemala City, and the results will be presented as a basis of information for a more objective discussion about this group of working children.

We are facing an on going phenomenon that despite being quite visible is totally ignored: the migration of non- accompanied female working children. Certainly the contribution of this study to the understanding of the magnitude of this phenomenon will be minimal, nevertheless it should serve as an indicator of the situation of a group, independently of its size always significant of the children and youth in Guatemala.

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