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AND YOUTH IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Jointly sponsored by the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning, and the United Nations Children's Fund, in co-operation with the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Health Organization

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SUMMARY
of

the Report Prepared by the Government of Honduras

Introduction.

The country has an area of 112,088 sq. kms. and a total population of 2,023,603 inhabitants (1963 figures), which gives an average population density of 18.1 inhabitants per sq. km.

According to 1961 Census figures 35.3 per cent of the population was under 10 years of age, 47.8 per cent was under 15 years of age, and 57.6 per cent was under 20 years of age.

At that time the population numbered 1,884,765 inhabitants and the economically active population numbered 567,988 and the unemployed, 34,267.

The average per capita income is low: \$220 per annum; the cost of living is high and has risen steadily from 1948 to 1963.

Industry is incipient and skilled workers are scarce; there is a high rate of illiteracy and technicians are very few for the country's needs. The country's main resources are agricultural exports: bananas, coffee, tobacco, etc.

Poor means of transportation, largely due to the country's topography, mean that many children have no access to educational facilities.

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In the past, education had largely tended to produce high school graduates (bachillerato), teachers, and to the liberal professions, but now efforts are being made to increase technical education.

Health.

The birth rate is the highest in Central America: 46.3 per thousand in 1963. That same year the infant mortality rate was 47 per thousand. The general mortality rate has dropped, but it must be borne in mind that many deaths, particularly of infants, are not recorded.

The main causes of children's deaths are gastroenteritis, respiratory diseases, infectious and parasitic diseases and early childhood diseases. A high proportion of deaths are recorded with no proper cause of death being specified.

The last gastroenteritis epidemic appeared in 1962 in San Pedro Sula but was brought under control by Government measures and the assistance of the United States Navy.

Smallpox has been eradicated from the country with vaccination campaigns.

Immunization campaigns on a national scale are carried out against pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, smallpox, polio and typhoid fever.

In 1963 there were 26 general hospitals, 2 tuberculosis sanatoria, and 1 neuropsychiatric hospital. In addition, there were 8 health centres, 22 health sub-centres, 22 mother and child centres and 8 health posts, all of which are for out patients. There are also 8 mobile units for rural areas.

Malnutrition is a serious problem in children, particularly in the post-weaning period. Kwasiorkor, a disease caused by protein deficiency, causes the greatest number of deaths of children between 1 and 4 years of age; this is because after weaning starch becomes the staple diet.

The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Education have jointly created a co-ordinated nutrition plan and have established milk centres in all health centres.

Education.

The main problem is the high degree of illiteracy, which in 1961 extended to 52.7 per cent of the population; the literacy level is higher in the younger age groups.

The number of schools has increased significantly since 1950 and so have enrollments; nevertheless, school drop outs continue to be fairly high, particularly in rural areas.

Pre-primary level. The level is designed for children 4 to 6 years and attendance is not compulsory. In 1963 there was a total of 48 kindergartens in the country.

Primary level. This level is designed for children in the 7 to 14 years age group and attendance is compulsory. The primary level comprises 6 grades, but rural schools often only have three. Primary education is also imparted at special (night) schools for adults, 30 of which were in operation in 1963. In 1963 there were 3,667 primary schools throughout the country with a total registration of 51.6 per cent of the school age population. Since 1950 there has been a 67.5 per cent increase in the number of establishments at this level and the ratio of the enrolled school population has also risen. However, a great many rural schools often are staffed by non-graduate teachers and often lack the necessary equipment. A great effort is being made by the Ministry of Education to train urban and rural teachers.

The over-all average school drop outs in 1963 was 26.8 per cent; this figure is lower in urban centres (22.1 per cent) and higher in rural areas (30.9 per cent). Efforts are being made to overcome the problem.

Middle level education. This level includes a basic 3 years cycle of general education after which students are streamed: Arts and Science (2 years), Secretarial (2 years), Normal (3 years), Business (3 years). The number of establishments at this level are insufficient for the country's needs.

In this level are included the country's 713 technical schools. To these must be added 7 specialized Technical and Vocational schools. It is obvious that technical education is far from adequate for the country's needs.

Higher Education. This level is provided by the Universidad Autónoma de Honduras which has 7 faculties and a school of general studies. This level of education is also provided by several specialized colleges whose entrance requirements are similar to those of the University.

There are 2 special schools, one for the deaf-and-dumb and the mentally deficient, and one for the blind.

In addition, the Escuela Vocacional de Jalteva is a home for children 8 to 16 years of age who present minor behaviour problems. Several trades are taught at this establishment.

Legislation, Protection and Welfare

There are juvenile courts, whose judges are assisted by social workers and teachers; the competence of the court extends to juvenile delinquents, protection of minors, abandoned children, etc.

In the case of juvenile delinquents, the judge may remand the minor in the care of a social worker, place him with a desirable family, send him to a reform school or medical institution. The reform school has yet to be created. In all cases, the report of a social worker and a psychological examination are required.

Abandoned minors are placed with desirable foster families or sent to special schools.

A draft bill on adoption has been prepared.