LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN
AND YOUTH IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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SUMMARY

of

the Report Prepared by the Government of Colombia

Introduction.

Colombia has an area of 1,383,338 sq. kms. and presents four
distinct climatic zones depending mainly on altitude, which has
a considerable impact on population distribution.

The total urban population is estimated at 8.4 million and
the total rural population at 9.1 million for 1966.

43.9 per cent of the population is under 15 years of age.

The average rate of population growth is approximately 3.2
per cent per year.

66.2 per cent of deaths affect the under 15 years age group.

The average per capita income amounts to US$ 275 per annum
at 1958 prices.

Attention is given to family welfare, the family being regarded
as the basic social unit.

Housing programs to take care of the deficit of 500,000
dwellings are under way.

/Health
Health.

Colombia's General Economic and Social Development Plan gives high priority to public health, but the first four year stage of implementation did not attain the pre-established goals.

There is one physician per 1,032 urban inhabitants, and in rural areas the ratio drops to 1 physician per 2,673 people.

Of every five deliveries, one is attended by an unskilled midwife.

The first stage of the Public Health Plan included the establishment of 100 integrated Health Centres (in the 1961-64 period), but only 52 per cent of this goal was attained, and that incompletely as to staffing and facilities.

The Sanitation program on provision of drinking water (1961-64) was only 24.5 per cent completed, and the program on public latrines for the same period was only 27.7 per cent completed.

There are 2.8 hospital beds per thousand inhabitants of which 0.6 beds per thousand are for the under 15 years age group.

Of a total 821 projects for hospitals and health centres, only 114 were completed.

Failure to complete the Public Health programs was due to a progressive decline of budgetary allocations for the purpose (The Ministry of Public Health allocation out of the total budget has declined from 5.7 per cent in 1961 to 3.8 per cent in 1965) and to the fact that foreign financing did not come up to expectations.

Nutrition.

Nutritional deficiencies, particularly with regard to proteins and calories are a serious problem of child morbidity and mortality; they are often followed up by gastrointestinal and respiratory diseases. Anemia is also common.

Endemic goiter is prevalent despite legislation on iodized salt, enacted many years ago but which delayed 12 years before being put into effect.

Dental caries also constitute a serious public health problem.

The National Nutrition Institute established in 1963 has as its purpose the attainment of optimum nutritional levels. For this purpose it does research, trains personnel at all levels, recommends diets, revises the Government and is responsible for the PINA (Integrated Program for Applied Nutrition), a co-operative program.
of the Colombian Government and some U.N. specialized agencies (FAO, WHO, and UNICEF), bearing in mind the considerable protein deficiency the Institute, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and with UNICEF has been developing a program for the introduction of Incarina, a product of vegetable origin, of high nutritional value and low cost, into the diet of pre-schoolers and families in general.

Education.

This constitutes one of the country's most complex problems, aggravated by the high proportion of non-trained teachers.

The budgetary allocation for education has decreased from 15.1 per cent in 1962 to 14 per cent in 1965.

In 1961 there was a shortage of 30,000 classrooms, and 3,256 were built in the 1961-64 period, the goal having been 4,000 classrooms.

School registrations have declined from 33 per cent non registered in the 7-11 age group in 1959 to 46.4 per cent non registration of the same age group in 1964.

The total number of educational establishments at all levels is 25,549 which figure includes public and private establishments.

The program for the next 4 years (1965-68) includes the building and equipment of 11,800 classrooms and the training of 305,447 teachers.

Steps have been taken to reform curricula, solve the school drop-out problem, improve teaching standards, etc.

Vocational guidance has been given considerable attention and the SENA (National Apprenticeship Service) trained 14,893 apprentices for industry, trade agriculture and service activities between 1958 and 1964. This institution also trains skilled and semi-skilled workers and co-operates with enterprises in the training of their staff in the field of personnel training and supervisory activities.