

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



LIMITED

E/LACCY/NR/L.6 - Resumé
September 7, 1965

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN
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

Santiago, Chile, 28 November to 11 December, 1965

SUMMARY
of

the Report Prepared by the Government of Paraguay

Introduction

Paraguay is an intra-continental country having an area of 406,705 sq. kms. which in 1962 had a total population of 1,816,890 inhabitants which figure does not include this indigenous population not counted in the census and estimated at the figure of 30,000.

The average rate of population growth since 1950 has been 3.06 per cent per annum.

Population density varies greatly: 0.4 inhabitants per sq. km. in the Western area or Chaco which covers approximately 54 per cent of the country's total area; on the other hand, 95 per cent of the population lives in the smaller Eastern area. 64.4 per cent of the population is rural; approximately one half of the urban population lives in Asunción.

The population in general is young: 42.8 per cent under 15 years in 1962. It is estimated that in 1962 the economically active population numbered approximately 563,000 (53.7 per cent).

Per capita income is low: in 1960 the average was US\$ 117 per annum.

/The general

The general death rate is 10 per thousand; the infant mortality rate is 93 per thousand (infants up to 11 months); 33.8 per cent of deaths affect the under 5 years age group. Many deaths are recorded with no medical certificate and provisions making it compulsory to advise the Health Authorities of the outbreak of a communicable disease are not complied with.

Though transportation is improving it is still inadequate for the needs of development.

Housing

Housing construction has increased but is still insufficient; one-room dwellings are common; 41.8 per cent of the Asunción population lives crowded 4 to 5 persons in 1 room, and in rural areas 65.4 per cent of the population live 5 or more persons to a room.

Only 15 per cent of the population has drinking water supplied. In rural areas 43 per cent of dwellings lack drinking water supplies.

Only in Asunción is there a sewage disposal system, and this is extensive only to 43 per cent of that city's population. In rural areas 88 per cent of dwellings have individual excreta disposal systems, but of these 70 per cent are in poor repair.

Health

The main causes of the high infant and child mortality rates are diarrhoea, enteritis, pneumonia, bronchitis, measles, tetanus.

Lack of drinking water and sewage facilities and of garbage disposal systems result in contamination and infection.

In some parts of the country malaria is endemic. Other vector communicated diseases are Leishmaniosis and Chagas disease. The low population density of some areas makes health programmes difficult; in addition, the indigenous population hinders some public health activities such as vaccination, tuberculosis campaigns, etc.

There is an average of 2 hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants for the whole country (in Asunción the ratio is 6.6 per 1,000 and in the interior it is 1.1 per 1,000).

The Ministry of Public Health maintains 60 Health Centres, 120 Health Posts, 3 Mother-and-Child Centres in Asunción, 3 Children's Homes and 4 Kindergartens.

/Public health

Public health activities are also performed by the military and police forces, by the Medical School of the Universidad Nacional, by the Social Security Institute, by the Red Cross and by the Cancer Institute. Poor co-ordination between all these agencies is detrimental to the best use of facilities and effort.

In 1965 the Ministry of Public Health was allocated 5.65 per cent of the National Budget; however, it should be noted that only 25 per cent of this Ministry's budget is assigned to the purchase of equipment, drugs, etc.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Public Health has prepared a Two-Year Plan addressed to lowering mother and child mortality and morbidity, to improving sanitary conditions, to extending health and hygiene education, to the control of communicable diseases, etc., in order to raise the general level of health.

Nutrition

Efforts are being made to improve the population's nutrition. There is a programme for the distribution of powdered milk, fats, and some grains, with special regard for children and families. Altogether there are some 407 distribution centres throughout the country. The programme, nevertheless, is hindered by high freight charges and by the gradual decrease of foreign aid.

PAEN (the Nutrition and Education in Nutrition Programme) which the Ministries of Public Health, Education and Agriculture organized jointly, with FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO and CARITAS co-operation also distributes powdered milk, etc., in addition to providing education in the field of nutrition.

Education

By constitutional provision primary education is free and compulsory.

Pre-primary level. This is not compulsory, but is of great value, particularly in the rural areas where many of the children speak only guaraní.

Primary level. 82 per cent of the 7-14 years age group enrolled in primary schools in 1962. There is a high drop-out rate: only 12 per cent of children enrolled complete the six grades of primary education; the proportion of failures is also high, particularly in the first three years.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of schools - 47.6 per cent more schools in 1963 than in 1953, making a total of 2,501 primary schools. The number of teachers has also increased but is insufficient (in 1963 many teachers taught more than one shift); teaching equipment is also insufficient though an effort to overcome this has been made with UNESCO financial and technical assistance.

/Middle level.

Middle level. In 1962, 12 per cent of the 15-20 years age group enrolled in the middle level.

This level comprises two cycles: a three-year general education cycle after which children are streamed into a second cycle which may be "Bachillerato" (leading to Higher Education), commercial school or normal school.

Vocational Schools and Industrial Education constitute technical education which comprises a 3-year basic cycle and a 3-year specialized cycle.

The middle level also includes the Military and Police Schools, 5 agricultural schools (under the Ministry of Agriculture) and 3 schools run by the Salesian order.

Drop-out rates are high: only 34.3 per cent of students enrolled complete the six-year course and the rate of failures is also high.

Between 1958 and 1963 the number of schools has increased by 8.1 per cent per annum. The standard of teachers varies greatly: in 1963, 24.5 per cent were university graduates, 39.6 per cent had teaching degrees. Equipment and teaching materials are generally adequate in Asunción but very insufficient in the interior and in the rest of the country.

Higher education. There are two Universities: the Universidad Nacional de Asunción (state) and the Universidad Católica "Nuestra Señora de Asunción" (founded in 1960).

Over 90 per cent of middle education graduates enroll in the Universities, mostly in arts, law and economics. There is a traditional trend toward liberal professions.

Adult education. There is an adult education programme for the eradication of illiteracy (34.2 per cent of the population over 15 years was illiterate in 1950), which receives UNESCO aid. However, both staff and funds are insufficient.

The armed forces teach conscripts to read and write. In the penitentiary convicts are also taught to read and write.

In adult education may also be included the work done by the Servicio de Extensión Agrícola of the Ministry of Agriculture, by the Instituto de Bienestar Rural and the Programme on Nutrition and Education in Nutrition (already mentioned).

Though at all levels of education there are private establishments, education is regarded as a State responsibility entrusted to the Ministry of Education. The education budget for 1963 was equivalent to 2.1 per cent of the G.N.P. Alliance for Progress funds have been used to build schools.

Protection and Welfare

The Ministry of Public Health and Welfare is responsible for the people's social welfare. In 1963 the Departamento de Asuntos Sociales was created as an agency of this Ministry to carry out research and to establish priorities. The División de Bienestar Social of the same Ministry is responsible for family welfare and for the prevention of child desertion, etc. It cares for children in 2 Children's Homes and in one Nursery and in 4 kindergartens; it also places children in foster homes.

The Ministry of Agriculture, through its Agricultural Education and Extension Programme also carries out some community development activities within which Youth Clubs provide some guidance.

The Ministry of Defense is responsible for the care and protection of the indigenous population.

The Ministry of the Interior is carrying out research on juvenile delinquency and seeking solutions thereto. (The juvenile delinquency rate is 20 per cent of all offenses.)

The Social Security Institute also performs some welfare activities but these are not as extensive as they should be due to widespread non-compliance with relevant legislation.

Many charitable and religious organizations do welfare work.

In general protection and welfare efforts lack co-ordination and are insufficient; skilled personnel is scarce; the law on family allowance is observed in the breach. Efforts are being made to increase and improve welfare activities, to increase the availability of personnel, etc. The main obstacle is financing.

