UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

LIMITED

E/LACCY/NR/L.10-Resumé
21 September, 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 Costa Rica

Introduction.

The Planning Bureau (Oficina de Planificación), directly responsible to the President of the Republic was created in 1963 and is entrusted with promoting economic and social development.

Efforts are being made to stem the migration of rural youth to the cities, which leads to urban unemployment and the formation of shanty towns. There are also sanitation projects which include a water supply program, a latrine program and a sewage disposal program. In the same way health campaigns and programs are under way in order to combat the country's main health scourges, particularly parasitic diseases. Efforts are also being made to improve nutrition, and to adapt education to national development needs.

Health.

The Ministry of Public Health (Ministerio de Salubridad Pública) is responsible for the care of the population's health. One of this Ministry's major departments, the Departamento Materno Infantil is responsible for clinics where healthy children have health check-ups, for hospitals for children who are ill, for pre-natal clinics, maternity hospitals and for the specialized training of physicians and nurses in these fields.

/The main

The main cause of infant mortality is gastroenteritis; other causes are tumors, circulatory diseases, pneumonia and bronchopneumonia, prematurity and certain early childhood diseases (measles, pertussis), malnutrition and tetanus.

Immunization campaigns against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, smallpox, tuberculosis (B.C.G. Vaccine), polio, etc. have been planned.

The country has 83 Public Health units throughout the country; in addition, 8 rural areas are covered by the Programa Móvil de Salud begun in January 1963.

Public Health care is extended principally to women from 15 to 44 years and to children up to 6 years of age.

The Dirección General de Asistencia Médico-Social is a semi-autonomous agency under the Ministry of Public Health which is responsible for hospitals. Amongst these we must mention the Children's National Hospital inaugurated in 1964, which has very fine facilities. All hospitals, save those belonging to the Social Security system are under this agency.

An effort is being made to overcome the problem of intestinal parasites through campaigns which are entrusted to the Departamento de Lucha contra el Parasitismo.

There is also a National Anti-alcoholism Commission.

Nutrition.

Malnutrition is one of the country's serious problems, though the number of deaths due to dietary deficiencies have dropped because of pre-natal care and of the "Nutritional Protection" provided for children under 7 years in nutrition centres. Powdered milk is provided for infants under one year and from children between the ages of one and two.

Joint Programs have been undertaken by the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Public Health in order to help overcome the problem of malnutrition through the establishment of school and family truck gardens.

The Departamento de Nutrición of the Ministry of Public Health is responsible for technical studies on nutrition, nutrition policy in health centres and schools and for combating malnutrition through education, nutrition centres and programs for complementary nutrition.

/Education

Education

Approximately 20 per cent of the population is illiterate, most of illiterates being adults.

Primary education is free and compulsory; nevertheless over 70 thousand children do not attend school for a variety of economic and social reasons.

Most rural schools have only 2 grades, though the system provides for six grades in all primary schools.

In general the educational system at all levels presents serious quantitative and qualitative deficiencies;

26 per cent of school age children receive no education at all; 30.3 per cent leave after completing the first two grades of primary school; 17 per cent leave school after completing primary grades 3, 4 and 5; only 16.9 per cent complete the sixth grade of primary education; only 22 per cent of children who enroll in middle education complete the first cycle (general and pre-vocational education); only 26.6 per cent of children who begin the middle level of education complete the course (this figure is equivalent to only 2.4 per cent of the country's youth); 49 per cent of the 12 to 16 years age group does not enroll in school.

At all levels there is a great need to revise curricula, increase the number of graduate teachers, adapt education to national need, overcome drop-outs, etc.

The Ministry of Education has set a series of goals in this regard:

In Primary education the main goals are to attain 100 per cent enrolment of children in the 7 to 14 years age group; to extend rural primary schools so that they provide the full six grades; to decrease school drop-out figures; to provide the necessary teaching and supervisory personnel, and the requisite equipment, and to improve teaching methods, keeping them in line with modern developments.

In the middle level the main goals are to modernize curricula, lower the drop-out ratio, to diversify the end objective of this level (at present it is mainly focused to University entrance instead of technology) to increase the number of schools and their equipment, to improve teachers, etc.

In Technical and Vocational Education the main goals are to adapt curricula to the country's current and future needs in industry, agriculture and business; to create and equip the necessary establishments, to obtain international technical assistance for such schools, to train the necessary staff and to establish a scholarship system.

/The main

The main goals in normal education are to modernize curricula, to increase the number of graduate teachers in the school system, to train teachers for the normal schools themselves, and to increase the number of normal schools or teachers colleges.

The University of Costa Rica has organized a post-graduate course (which takes place after working hours or during vacations) for educators who wish to specialize in school supervision and administration.

The Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje was created to solve the problem of low enrolments in the 12 to 16 years age group. This establishment covers two general fields: short-term training of workers and long-term professional training; the latter includes "pre-apprenticeship" (children and youths 12 to 16) and "apprenticeship". The pre-apprenticeship program has been prepared with UNICEF assistance and also with the advice of an ILO expert. The curricula of this establishment take due note of the fact that Costa Rica is a predominantly agricultural and pastoral country. The needs of girls are also taken into account with courses in dressmaking, hotel management and various handicrafts.

Welfare, Legislation and Family Organization.

The family is regarded as the basis of society and is entitled to protection under the constitution.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is responsible for the establishment of a general policy for the protection of workers and their families and for the organization and administration of public welfare services. The Dirección General de Bienestar Social is a department of this Ministry which in its turn has 2 major departments: "Bienestar de la Familia" (Family Welfare) and "Desarrollo de la Comunidad y Administración de Instituciones" (Community Development and Institutional Administration).

Family protection includes family allowances, unemployment subsidies, etc. Protection of children includes placement in foster homes, day nurseries, children's homes, temporary children's homes, etc.

Within the Ministerio de Gobernación y Policía (Home Secretary) the Consejo Superior de Defensa Social is responsible for two institutions for the care of minors with behavioural problems. This agency has a staff of social workers and has prepared rehabilitation programs.

Great efforts are made to improve the treatment of juvenile delinquents: one of the establishments to which they may be sent is a home which includes a primary school and a vocational school. There is also a temporary home for children with behavioural problems, to prevent juvenile delinquency.

/Special Courts

Special Courts for minors prevent delinquency and promote rehabilitation and adaptation to community life.

The Extension Service of the Ministry of Agriculture contributes to the betterment of rural life through men's clubs, women's clubs, and "4-S Clubs" for youth.

The social security system is extensive and includes a program known as "Family insurance" which provides certain benefits for the family as a whole.