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CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN BRITISH GUIANA

submitted by the Government of British Guiana

INTRODUCTION.

1. British Guiana, on the north-east coast of South America between Surinam on the east and Venezuela on the west, is a self-governing British Colony on the brink of attaining full independence. Its population, estimated at the end of 1964 to be approximately 638,000, is made up of people of diverse races whose ethnic origins are to be found in Europe, Africa and Asia. Practically the whole of this population lives in a narrow strip of land between 5 and 10 miles wide along the Atlantic Coast (at a density of about 180 per square mile), leaving 96 per cent of the total land area of approximately 83,000 square miles almost completely uninhabited (density about 0.5 per square mile). Georgetown the capital, with a population of 153,000, is the only real city. The other towns, New Amsterdam (12,000) and Mackenzie/Wismar (18,000), are not much larger than the bigger villages.

2. The principle ethnic groups, Indians and Negroes, who with smaller proportions of Portuguese and Chinese were originally brought to the territory for work on the riverain and coastal sugar plantations, have been integrated into one system of social, economic and political organisation. The numbers in the different ethnic groups are estimated as follows:

Table I

East Indians	320,074
Africans	199,823
Mixed	75,991
Portuguese	6,375
Chinese	3,914
Europeans	2,420
Amerindians	<u>29,429</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>638,026</u>

3. All the inhabitants of the country speak one language, English, with the possible exception of a few remote Amerindian tribes. "The Indians are more easily distinguishable as an ethnic group than the Negroes because of their relatively recent absorption into the society. There has been so much intermixture of Negroes with other races that the ethnic boundaries are often difficult to define and such African culture as survives is very marginal to the every-day life of Guianese Negroes. This is less true of the Indians though the degree of assimilation and attenuation of an Indian way of life is remarkable and much more pronounced than in any other overseas community of Indians with numbers comparable to those in Guiana."^{1/} The majority of Indians are adherents of Hinduism

^{1/} Smith, Raymond T., British Guiana, O.U.P., 1962, p. 105.

/and Islam,

and Islam, the traditional religions of India and Pakistan, but many, like the other ethnic groups, are Christians. Although the indigenous people of the country, the Amerindians have in the main been content to live apart in the forests and savannahs of the hinter-land and have never attained social prominence or economic significance or become part of the common Guianese society.

4. Before 1917 when large-scale immigration from India came to an end, the population was fairly stable. The predominance of men among the immigrant Indians and poor medical facilities and environmental sanitation resulted in a low reproduction rate and a high mortality rate. Improvements in health and sanitation in the 1920's and 1930's and the eradication of malaria in the early 1940's have led to a population explosion, the crude birth rate now being 43 per 1,000 and the crude death rate 10 per 1,000. The effect of this has been a high percentage of children and youth in the population. Miss Pearl Jephcott in her report on survey of youth in 1956 pointed out as follows: "The outstanding fact about the population of British Guiana and its phenomenal growth in the last eight years, is too well known to be elaborated here. The death rate alone, due primarily to the control of malaria is half that of 1943, and a population net increase of nearly 25 per cent has taken place in eight years, from 369,000 in 1946 to 460,000 by 1954. As the following figures show the 13-19 age population has grown by over 11,000 between 1946 and 1956; and by 1966 will include nearly 30,000 more than there are today. What is more significant, of course, is the change in the structure of the population, 47 per cent aged under 20 in 1946 and 59 per cent by 1966. In ten years time therefore well over one in two of every Guianese will still be a child or teenager, and the provision for education, recreation and youth employment will have to be on a very large scale. The following table shows the numbers of population within three age groups in 1946, 1956, 1966. While the rate increase of the teenage group was greater than that of the adult, both were exceeded by the very rapid increase in the child group."^{2/}

Table II

POPULATION

	0-12 years	13-19 years	20 + years	Total
1946	123,710	51,926	194,042	369,678
1956	183,640	63,350	226,590	473,580
1966 (est.)	305,130	92,760	277,010	674,900

5. Economically, British Guiana has developed above subsistence level, the per capita income in 1964 being \$438: (BWI). Further, income is more evenly distributed than in most countries in the Americas. In

^{2/} Jephcott, Pearl, Report on the needs of the Youth in the more populated Coastal Areas of British Guiana, para 6.

/common with

common with other under-developed countries, "British Guiana is a primary producer, selling her products overseas and relying on imports to meet her requirements of manufactured goods. Her primary products are few in number. The bulk of exports consist of raw sugar, rice unprocessed bauxite, and timber."^{3/} The weakness of an economy depending on just a few export products is fully realised and serious efforts are being made to develop manufacturing industries and to diversify the economy.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

6. A first priority for any nation, especially one with half of its population minors, should be the welfare of its children and youth. British Guiana has not ignored the needs of its rapidly growing young population and indeed has been able to satisfy some of these needs fairly adequately.

Health

7. Provision for the basic physical needs of food, shelter, medical care and clothing has continually improved, with the result that health standards have been developing steadily. Life expectancy has increased by about 10 years or nearly 20 per cent in 15 years. Expectation of life at birth is as follows:

Table III

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1945 - 1947	49.32	59.05
1959 - 1961	59.03	63.00

The infant mortality rate has been falling continually over the past 25 years, as Table IV shows:

Table IV

(Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000)

1910	-	235
1920	-	151.5
1940	-	104
1950	-	85
1958	-	61.2
1959	-	57.2
1964	-	55

8. The chief causes of infant mortality at present are:

- (i) Gastro-enteritis and Colitis; and
- (ii) Diseases of the respiratory system (chiefly broncho-pneumonia).

^{3/} Smith, Raymond T., Op. cit., p.105

/Gastro-enteritis

Gastro-enteritis and Colitis is usually the third to fourth highest cause of death for all ages of the population, but the mortality from this disease is essentially limited to children under 5 years of age, and most of the deaths are in the 0 - 1 year age group, as the following table shows:

Table V
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF DEATHS FROM GASTRO-ENTERITIS
AND COLITIS DISEASES
(By number and per cent)

	1962		1963	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
Under 1 year	229	69.3	332	70.0
1 - 2 years	43	13.0	79	16.6
2 - 5 years	12	3.6	11	2.3
5 years +	46	13.9	52	10.9
<u>Total</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>99.8</u>	<u>474</u>	<u>99.8</u>

The lethal episode in most of the deaths from Gastro-enteritis and Colitis under 5 years reflects a complex synergistic chain of antecedent and coincident conditions including nutritional deprivation and repeated bouts with infectious agents of disease. The nutritional disorders in these children are mostly of the nature of protein-calorie malnutrition.

9. The general nutritional state of children is considered to be satisfactory, but repeated surveys of school children reveal a relatively large number of minor deficiencies, referable to a deficiency in the diet of those foods which are good sources of B-complex vitamins, chiefly riboflavin and niacin.

Social Security

10. The problem of children in need of social assistance or of institutional care is not grave. There are in the society several orphans and semi-orphans but the social pattern of care and non-legal adoption by relatives or friends with very limited or no assistance from the State has been reinforced since 1918 when a large Government orphanage which catered for a few hundred children was closed down. Except in the case of the handicapped, it is not difficult to find voluntary foster parents for children in need of care. However, there are no facilities for the institutional care of the physically handicapped and mentally retarded.

/11. Social

11. Social Security provisions are far from satisfactory. There is need to provide more adequate cash grants and to liberalise Public Assistance which is still patterned on the 19th century United Kingdom Poor Law Act. A scheme is preceded to cover sickness of the breadwinner and, if possible, survivors' benefits.

Housing

12. The intercommunal disturbances and consequent population shift and economic deterioration of the last 3 years have considerably reduced the number of homes for the rapidly growing population and created a serious housing shortage. The activities of Government in the field of public housing and of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee, which provides housing loans to sugar workers, have over the years helped greatly to increase the number and improve the type of homes throughout the country. Nevertheless, the building programme has not kept pace with the population increase and especially in the city housing is a problem.

Education

13. Since 1876 primary education has been legally compulsory but the law was not vigorously enforced until during the 1920's. Literacy is thus not a problem. The country's financial resources are however under severe strain providing education for the rapidly growing population. With the introduction of secondary departments in all-age schools and the consequent reduction in the number of withdrawals, the school population is now increasing at the rate of 14,000 per year, but the Government has been unable to provide accommodation for one-fourth of this number. By the end of 1964, there was a backlog of 42,000 school places with the result that there is severe overcrowding in schools many of which have had to go on the double shift system.

14. There is great need to shift the emphasis of education in favour of more technical training. The Man Power Survey referred to below shows that despite the wide-spread unemployment, several vacancies in various industries have remained unfilled because technically qualified personnel could not be found. Further, the implementation of the 1966/72 Development Plan now being formulated will require the services of a large number of technicians and skilled workmen far in excess of the current rate of output of the education system.

Employment

15. Unemployment, one of the gravest national problems, has been on the increase during the last 10 years and is now as high as 20.9 per cent of the total labour force. It is particularly noticeable among school leavers. A Man-Power survey carried out early in 1965 revealed that in Georgetown 44 per cent of the unemployed are between the ages of 14 and 19 years. Further unemployment is greater in the rural than in the urban areas. The Survey report states that "a genuine dislike of young persons to pursue agricultural occupations with the result that many remain idle and at the same time live in the hope of getting other kinds of jobs, plus

/mechanisation in

mechanisation in certain industries, for example, sugar and rice, would seem to be the more important factors causing this picture".^{4/} In the past, rice cultivation was so labour-intensive that schools in some rural areas were closed at certain periods to facilitate the use of children at planting and harvesting time. Mechanisation and rationalisation in the sugar industry introduced for the sake of greater productivity and efficiency have also had the effect of reducing the industry's labour requirements.

Urbanisation

16. The distaste for farming among the youth is one of the factors responsible for the significant drift of young people from the rural areas to the city. Other contributing factors are the drabness of life, the absence of electricity, the lack of employment opportunities, and the limited scope for proper education and advancement. In view of the substantial number of unemployed in Georgetown, especially among those seeking their first jobs, it is surprising that there has not been a rise in juvenile delinquency. The ill effects of widespread unemployment and rootlessness are too well known to be listed. It is enough to emphasize that the young potential worker finds protracted idleness a degrading experience often resulting in loss of ideals and ambition, shiftlessness and general moral deterioration.

Village Life

17. Another serious problem affecting young people in the rural areas is the gradual breaking up of the customary village life and structure. Traditionally, village life centred around the leadership of certain "key" persons - ministers of religion, school teachers, landowners, postmasters and other salaried government officers. Of these, the minister and head-teacher were the most respected, their role being a multipurpose one. Within the last two decades, and owing mainly to constitutional developments and the use of mass communications media, the importance of the traditional leaders has tended to decline in favour of the politicians whose influence has sometimes been unsettling. During the recent years of internal conflict teenagers were drawn into the heat of the controversy and often were prominent in acts of violence.

The Family

18. Broad generalisations regarding the position of children and youth in the family can be misleading. The main criteria which may be used for this purpose in the context of British Guiana are geographical position and ethnic origin. In the rural areas where the principal occupations are work on the sugar cane plantations, provision farming and rice cultivation apart from other occupations and services necessary for the existence and continuation of society, the differences in family life between the Indian and Negro communities are greater than in the city. It is part of the

^{4/} Preliminary Report, Survey of Manpower Requirements and the Labour Force, British Guiana, 1965, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, p. 178.

stereotype to think of the Indian as the rural farmer and the Negro as the urban industrial worker. This is only very broadly true, for while the majority of sugar estate workers and rice farmers are Indians, in the past 10 to 20 years movement of Indians into other occupations and into the city has been increasing very considerably.

19. As has been pointed out above, the ethnic groups in British Guiana do not constitute exclusive communities living side by side; their differences represent but sub-cultures within the dominant culture of the society. Among rural Indians "the broad picture that emerges is of a family structure in which the nuclear family is the key unit; early marriage is the norm; paternal authority is respected; and ideally young married couples should live in the household of the husband's parents".^{5/} The father-son bond is very strong and emphasis is placed on male dominance. One of the major obligations of a father is to arrange for the marriage of his children. The young people have a say in the choice of a spouse but look to their parents to arrange the rituals and meet the necessary expenses. They are generally in open revolt against the remaining vestiges of the custom where the selection of partners is entirely in the hands of parents and often resort to elopement and sometimes suicide rather than acquiesce in the face of parental and social pressures.

20. In the rural Negro family "the bond between mother and child is the strongest in the whole matrix of social relationships and it endures through time as a strongly reciprocal relationship".^{6/} The father is the breadwinner and is clearly recognised to be the head of the house but he spends most of his time away from the home working for the maintenance of the family and his short visits home are not adequate to establish control over the family. "In point of fact it is usually his spouse who is the most knowledgeable person in family affairs and who makes the majority of the decisions affecting the whole household."^{6/} As soon as the sons are old enough to work on their own account they will no longer help their father in his farming but will seek work as tradesmen and whatever contribution they make to the home will be given to the mother.

21. In the urban areas, ethnic difference is not as significant in determining family life. Children and youth are more emancipated and are exposed to influences that broaden their horizons beyond those set by traditional cultures. They are usually allowed to take part in family discussions and are often members of social clubs and organisations. There is a growing tendency for both parents to seek employment outside the home, especially in the middle income groups, and so children are often left to themselves for the greater part of the day. The bonds of affection between parents and children are thus not as strong as in the rural areas.

^{5/} Smith, R.T. and Jayawardena, C., "Marriage and the Family amongst East Indians in British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, U.W.I. Vol. 8, No. 4, Dec. 1959, p. 375.

^{6/} Smith, Raymond T., The Negro Village in British Guiana, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1956, p. 65.

22. The high percentage of illegitimacy which is prevalent among the lower income groups militates against adequate provision for children and youth. This is particularly true of the Negro family where the peripheral part played in family life by the male cannot be regarded as effective for the care, protection and development of children. Among the Indians much of the illegitimacy is due to the fact that religious marriages which are contracted according to Hindu or Muslim rites are not automatically regarded as legal, but may be legalised by complying with the necessary legal requirements.

Juvenile Delinquency

23. Juvenile delinquency has been on the downward trend in recent years. The figures for 1964 reveal that 707 juveniles (612 boys and 95 girls) out of a total of 943 (795 boys and 148 girls) who were brought before the courts were found guilty. This represents a decrease of 171 or 19.4 per cent on the previous year's total of 878.

24. An analysis of the types of offences committed shows that there was a decline of 25 per cent in the offences classified as "Offences against Property with Violence" (Break and Enter and Larceny) and "Offences against Property without Violence" (Larcenies, etc.). There was, however, an increase in the number of "Offences against the Person". The over-all picture shows a continued reduction in the number of major offences.

25. The incidence of juvenile delinquency has decreased in the city and in most of the rural areas, but a sharp increase occurred in the East Coast Demerara district where there was a population influx of about 10,000 as a result of the recent intercommunal disturbances. The unsettled conditions of the make-shift communities had their greatest effect on children and youth, many of whom were charged for larceny, sexual offences and offences against public order.

MEASURES ADOPTED TO MEET NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

Health Service

26. The health services in British Guiana include a practically free national medical and hospital service provided by Government as well as programmes for environmental sanitation, disease control, infant welfare and maternal health, school health, dental health and mental health. Hospitals and dispensaries are also provided by major industries (bauxite and sugar) and the Georgetown Municipality runs a creche and infant welfare centres. The role of the health care services in reducing the incidence of gastro-enteritis and colitis especially among infants and children is limited to measures to promote personal and household hygiene, to improve sanitary production of milk and to improve nutrition. An environmental sanitation programme is at present underway to improve faeces disposal in Essequibo, one of the three counties into which the

/country is

country is divided. The objectives are to erect an improved type of privy in home premises and to replace the unsatisfactory privies in the schools with septic-tank disposal system. Facilities are also provided in the schools for the children to engage in effective handwashing and so raise the standard of personal hygiene. All these efforts are being linked with a Health Educational Programme.

27. The provision of a potable water supply for the inhabitants of all three counties is continually being increased. Greater efforts are also being made to improve the quality and quantity of milk production at the Milk Pasteurisation Plant in Georgetown. A free issue of skimmed milk, cereals, vitamins and minerals is being made to mothers and children attending 33 health centres and 116 maternal and child health stations. In 90 primary and all-age schools in the interior and riverain areas snack meals consisting of a glass of non-fat skimmed milk, with a content of 1 oz. milk powder per child, and two food yeast biscuits of wheaten flour with a content of 11 per cent food yeast, and 18 per cent sugar, are provided. Through a grant of milk powder from U.S.A.I.D. about 48,000 children from 375 schools are given milk daily.

Social Security

28. Approximately 7,500 children 15 years old and under were in receipt of public assistance grants totalling about \$700,000 in 1964. The pressure on the financial resources of some families is also alleviated by a non-contributory Old Age Pension Scheme and further assisted by a limited programme of aided self-help housing.

29. There are 3 institutions with about 200 orphans or semi-orphans run by voluntary organisations which receive \$7,000 in annual subventions from the Government. The B.G. Branch of the British Red Cross has a convalescent home for children with accommodation for 40 and receives an annual subvention of \$20,000 from the Government. About 25 deaf children attend a school conducted by this Society. There is also a small day care centre for about 70 children under the aegis of the municipality of Georgetown. All of the institutions under reference are situated in Georgetown.

30. In 1964, \$2 1/2 million of the national recurrent budget of \$69 million (BWI) was spent on social assistance, including non-contributory Old Age Pensions for persons 65 years and over (with a means test) and a 600-bed institution for the aged and infirm. Most of the expenditure was in the form of maintenance grants which were, however, far below the sums required for subsistence.

/Industrial Training

Industrial Training

31. Provision for the relief of unemployment, the prevention of child labour and the vocational training of young people includes legislation, a Board of Industrial Training to supervise apprenticeship and cadet-training schemes, a juvenile employment exchange, craft and agricultural training programmes in all-age schools and a Government Technical Institute and Agricultural College. The major industries (bauxite and sugar) operate their own training programmes for apprentices in the Engineering trades in accordance with arrangements approved by the Board of Industrial Training.

Education

32. Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14 and optional between 5 and 16, where accommodation is available. The school system was re-organised in 1963 and schools are now categorised as follows:

- (i) Primary Schools for children from 5 to 11 years,
- (ii) Secondary Schools for children from 12 years upwards; and
- (iii) All-age Schools with both primary and secondary departments.

The Primary and All-age Schools include (i) government-aided schools most of which are owned by various religious denominations (Christian) and receive annual grants, (ii) schools owned by mining settlements providing education for particular districts, and (iii) private non-aided schools which are run by individuals or organisations and do not come under the supervision of Government. In the Interior and in other less accessible parts of the country education is provided mainly by the various religious denominations working in remote mission centres. As soon as such schools qualify for recognition and for government grants, they are absorbed into the official education system under the control of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry is fully responsible for teachers' salaries in all the aided primary and all-age schools. In addition, maintenance grants are made to denominational bodies for the upkeep of their school buildings. Equipment and other grants are also provided.

33. To contain the gap between the demand for and provision of school places a scheme for building and erecting schools by self-help has been introduced and has had an enthusiastic response from the rural communities. World Food Programme assistance has been obtained in providing foodstuffs for self-helpers. School buildings erected by self-help cost Government one-third of the normal cost of providing such buildings.

34. Secondary education is provided by 13 Government, 14 Government-aided and approximately 40 privately owned secondary schools. These schools prepare pupils for the College of Preceptors and the General Certificate of Education examinations in order to qualify them for clerical employment or for higher education.

/35. Approximately

35. Approximately 5,000 pupils from 90 all-age schools receive training in Home Economics at 41 home economics departments attached to all-age schools and at 2 home economics centres, one of which, the Carnegie School of Home Economics, is mainly a teacher-training centre. Home Economics is also taught at 3 secondary schools in Georgetown. The curriculum includes food preparation and nutrition, home management, textiles and laundry work, home improvement, budgeting, child care and other related subjects.

36. In keeping with current trends for the expansion of pre-vocational training, more attention is being focussed on all phases of craft activity in schools. Only 35 of all-age schools, however, have handicraft departments, but there are 4 independent centres which cater for boys sent from nearby schools. The work in these handicraft centres and departments has in the past been concentrated on Woodwork and Technical drawing, but efforts are being made to commence Metalwork on a modest scale at one centre. In all-age schools, attention is also devoted to a variety of other crafts including basketry, bookcrafts, leatherwork and mat-making for both boys and girls and grants are given by the Government to the various governing bodies to assist them in purchasing of materials for use in such classes.

37. The Government Technical Institute in Georgetown offers courses at craft and technician level and has established a number of centres throughout the country to provide preliminary craft courses. The craft courses cover the engineering, electrical and building trades while the technical courses are in the areas of Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering and in Land Surveying. Courses are also offered in Navigation for coastal and Caribbean trading, and in Commercial Studies needed by stenotypists. Students attend classes on full-time, part-time (including evenings) and block release basis.

38. The University of Guiana was established and began classes in October, 1963. First degree courses are being offered in Arts and Natural and Social Sciences. The enrolment is at present nearly 300. New Departments include Geology, Sociology, Business Administration, Caribbean Studies and History of Political Thought. Classes are so far held only in the evenings.

Preventive and Rehabilitation Services

39. The preventive, rehabilitation and delinquency services provided for the benefit of children and youth are of relatively recent origin being only about 20 years old. There is a Probation Service rendered by a staff of 14 probation officers who in addition to carrying out investigations for the courts and supervising youths put on probation offer a limited casework service to families in danger of dissolution and to children inclined to truancy, wandering or behaviour difficulties. Two approved schools - Essequibo Boys School and Belfield Girls School - have been established for delinquent boys and girls committed by the courts. The Essequibo Boys School, which caters for boys between the ages of 12 and 18,

/is an

is an old institution run by the Government on old-fashioned lines of mass regimentation and strict discipline unrelieved by the use of casework and groupwork techniques. The Belfield Girls School, for girls between the ages of 8 and 18, is a newer institution but is also run on authoritarian lines by the Salvation Army with funds provided by the Government. Delinquent boys between 8 and 11 years old are kept at this School. The after-care help for boys and girls discharged from the two schools is carried out by an Officer of the Salvation Army with the assistance of the probation officers in the rural areas.

40. Juvenile Courts are held "to deal with the case in the best interest of the child or young person", but the courts are conducted by stipendiary magistrates and are held in the premises of the normal magistrates courts. A Remand Home for boys awaiting trial is operated by the Salvation Army with an annual subvention from the Government.

Youth Service

41. The Youth Service, i.e., the youth organisations, programmes and facilities provided to engage young people in wholesome leisure-time activities, is generally believed, quite naively at times, as the panacea for all the ills of youth. This belief has been responsible for the formation of a large number of youth clubs by public spirited persons in the towns and villages. Most of these clubs are unstable groups with limited programmes; nevertheless, they perform a worthwhile service to the young people in their districts when active. The local branches of international youth organisations, for example, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, Scouts and Guides, are the most stable of the youth organisations. They do very good work and are indeed the backbone of the youth movement. Each has a substantial central building of its own in Georgetown where the activities of branches in various districts of the country are co-ordinated. The Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. are the only youth organisations with paid full-time leadership. Four of the local organisations possess good buildings too and carry out programmes similar to the Y.M.C.A. but their work is hampered by the lack of full-time organisers.

42. The numerous small youth clubs to be found scattered throughout the country hold meetings in most cases in school buildings or village community centres. The field staff of the Community Development Division visit these groups regularly giving advice and other help, and conduct training courses for the benefit of their leaders and members.

43. The British Guiana Assembly of Youth (formerly the B.G. Youth Council) which was established 21 years ago and re-organised in 1963, can be regarded as a national institution. The majority of youth organisations, large and small, are affiliated to it. However, the Assembly does not provide effective co-ordination of the youth organisations, mainly through lack of a full-time secretary.

44. Government has made a significant contribution to the development of the Youth Service. With the establishment of the Social Welfare Division (now Community Development Division) in 1944 a Youth Organiser was appointed and steps taken to help form the B.G. Youth Council (now B.G. Assembly of Youth). Since then financial and technical assistance have been given to clubs and organisations and large-scale facilities, such as camp sites, have been provided. The larger organisations receive annual subventions from the Government ranging from \$250 to \$4,000 each, and capital grants for specific projects.

45. The main objectives of the youth work of the Community Development Division are to create an awareness in the community of the needs of youth and to encourage the growth and improve the programmes of voluntary youth organisations. Special attention is given to training and several courses and seminars conducted in various districts are well attended by youth leaders and club officers.

46. The Ministry of Education, Youth, Race Relations and Community Development is in the process of re-organising its programme of youth work. Plans are under consideration for providing more camp sites, establishing a permanent camp for training unemployed youth, employing more youth officers and giving special help to the small youth club.

Services by other Bodies

47. Besides Government, Industry (the sugar and bauxite companies) helps to foster the development of youth work. About 20 years ago the British Guiana Sugar Producers' Association started welfare work on the sugar estates with the emphasis on youth. The work has grown steadily and today there is a wide variety of activities on each estate. Leisure time facilities provided include well-kept playing fields, community centres, home, economics centres and libraries.

48. Local authorities, contrary to the example of similar bodies in England and the United States of America, are very much off the scene where the provision of services for children and youth is concerned. "For upwards of a century the local authorities were the only public authorities struggling with drainage and irrigation, and providing at least some vestige of an orderly local life. They are among the world's smallest local authorities, and they have to battle with one of the world's most intractable problems". Their concern has been limited to "the upkeep of village roads and dams and maintenance in some places of markets and burial grounds, together with a few regulatory duties over sanitary conditions and house building (and) in addition, most villages make small monetary contributions to social and health facilities; and in an increasing number of instances, substantial contributions to costs of community halls". They do not concern themselves "with simple duties in common with education, health, agriculture, youth work, child welfare, planning and many other series".^{7/}

^{7/} Marshall, A.H., Report on Local Government in British Guiana, May, 1955, p.7 para. 13.

49. The Georgetown municipality provides a wider range and better standard of services including public health and infant welfare programmes and the provision of playing fields, a swimming pool and other recreational facilities.

POLICY AND PLANNING

50. Legislation which provides for, or affects the care, protection or training of children and youth is to be found in the following Ordinances:

- (1) Infancy Ordinance, Chapter 39 of the Laws of British Guiana 1953.
- (2) Bastardy Ordinance, Chapter 40 of the Laws of British Guiana.
- (3) Adoption of Children Ordinance N° 12 of 1955.
- (4) Poor Relief Ordinance, Chapter 62 of the Laws.
- (5) Workmen's Compensation Ordinance, Chapter 111 of the Laws.
- (6) Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Ordinance, Chapter 107 of the Laws.
- (7) Juvenile Offenders Ordinance, Chapter 41 of the Laws.
- (8) Young Offenders Detention Ordinance, Chapter 84 of the Laws.
- (9) Probation of Offenders Ordinance, Chapter 19 of the Laws.
- (10) Essequibo Boys School Ordinance, Chapter 93 of the Laws.
- (11) Education Ordinance, Chapter 91 of the Laws.
- (12) Industrial Training Ordinance, Chapter 94 of the Laws.
- (13) Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Ordinance, Chapter 14 of the Laws.

51. The provisions of some of these ordinances sometimes operate against the welfare of children. The Poor Relief Ordinance, for example, denies public assistance to the wife and legitimate children of an able-bodied man if he is living in the home with them. When he is unemployed the only way his dependents can obtain public assistance is by his deserting them. Another example of a doubtful provision is Section 14 (2) of the Bastardy Ordinance which provides for the committal to prison of a putative father for failing to pay the maintenance fees for his child, but prescribes that "no arrears shall accrue under the order during the time that the putative father is in prison". In some cases the father goes to prison for short intervals instead of paying maintenance fees with the result that neither child, father nor country benefits from this legislation.

52. Sometimes the law requires more than the country can afford. The Young Offenders Detention Ordinance, for instance, provides for the establishment of separate detention facilities for young adults, but the provisions of the Ordinance cannot be implemented because there is no Borstal. In some cases there is no good reason why the law is not enforced. Section 15 of the Education Ordinance provides for the taking into custody of a child found habitually wandering or not under proper control or in bad company, on the authority of the Chief Education Officer. This is, however, no longer done, the result being that such a child is usually apprehended by the Police and tried for a criminal offence.

53. The Adoption of Children Ordinance which became effective in 1957 answered a long-felt need of all sections of the population. However, the financial costs of pursuing the legal procedure required for adoption have deterred persons of modest means from adopting children. Another factor contributing to the very moderate results of the Ordinance appears to be the limited awareness of the facility.

54. Workmen's Compensation, in accordance with the terms of the Ordinance, is paid in a lump sum. This is not the best way of providing for dependants in cases where death has resulted from the injury, because the mother or guardian of the children of the deceased is usually incapable of managing a large sum of money and often fritters it away on consumer goods instead of investing it to produce a regular income. A more helpful method of compensation would seem to be to make available to the dependants a pension based on the earning of the erstwhile breadwinner.

Research

55. Social research has played and is increasingly playing an important role in the development of policies and plans for the benefit of children, youth and the family. Reference has already been made to the study of the needs of youth conducted by Miss Jephcott in 1956 and to the recent Man-Power Survey carried out by a U.N. expert, Mr. O.J.C. Francis. Within recent years, studies have been carried out on certain aspects of Social Security, for the purpose of developing schemes to promote family stability. Government is at present considering introducing a National Pension Scheme with provision for invalidity and sickness benefits, and has been relying on the research of experts from the International Labour Organisation to help establish the feasibility of the Scheme. Another researcher (a U.N. expert) is engaged in a study of the preventive and rehabilitation services for the purpose of "advising Government on setting up a unified welfare service comprising family welfare and child protection and the treatment of offenders, including residential training and after-care".

56. On account of the limited number of suitably qualified Guianese, none of the studies in question has been undertaken by local persons. It is anticipated that the enquiring minds of the rapidly growing nucleus of Guianese economists and sociologists will soon be directed to research projects aimed at informing Government's policies and programmes. The value of conducting surveys preparatory to establishing programmes is generally accepted and special commissions of enquiry are frequently appointed to examine situations prior to the taking of action by the Government. One such commission has just concluded an enquiry into the problems of the families displaced by the intercommunal disturbances of the last few years with a view to recommending suitable programmes for their full rehabilitation.

/Planning

Planning

57. Like most emergent countries, British Guiana has relied on national development plans covering a period of a few years to accelerate the growth of its economy and the improvement of social conditions. The development plans are restricted to the Government sector, but account is also taken of activities in the private sector. A substantial portion of the development budgets is devoted to meeting the needs for education, health, housing and social welfare services, most of which are intended for the benefit of children and youth.

58. In a colonial territory important decisions are made by the metropolitan government or are subject to its approval and consequently there is usually a tendency for the population to expect everything to initiate from the Government.. British Guiana is no exception. This is not to say that the part played by private individuals and voluntary organisations in catering for the needs of children and youth is unworthy of note. In fact, before the introduction of the Government social welfare services in 1944 social work was almost exclusively voluntary. With the advent of the Government welfare services, however, it has become conventional for the Government to organise or be called upon to organise most of the programmes for meeting new needs or serving old needs better.

59. Non-officials and representatives of voluntary organisations are usually appointed members of boards and committees (e.g. local boards of guardians, school boards of management) responsible for administering or advising on various Government social welfare programmes and as such make a notable contribution to plans for the improvement of these services. Further, voluntary organisations, such as parent-teacher associations and infant welfare and maternity leagues which perform ancillary functions in connexion with Government-run services, often make recommendations that produce changes in the Government's plans.

60. Planning new services is, however, chiefly the Government's responsibility. Increasingly this is done with the joint participation of several ministries and departments. For example, a plan of operations for an Expanded Nutrition Programme is at present being actively considered. In this programme it is envisaged that the three major bodies engaged in promoting nutrition, viz: the Medical, Agriculture, and Education Departments and their respective Ministries will co-ordinate their efforts to improve the standard of nutrition of the population. In each village coming within the plan the medical aspects of the programme will be conducted mainly in health centres. Emphasis will be given to the nutrition of the maternal organism as it is related to the growth of the foetus, and the health of the new born infant. The importance of breast-feeding, the nutrition of the pre-school child will be stressed as well as the importance of a balanced diet to the health of the family. The educational aspects will be concerned with nutrition, education, home economics and school gardening. Agricultural extension officers in the districts will advise the school authorities on the types of crops that can be cultivated and also householders as to the type of health crops they can grow. The proposals have already been endorsed by

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UNICEF and material aid provided. In cases like this one it is the practice to consult with voluntary bodies functioning in the respective fields and to enlist their participation when the plan is implemented.

61. Institutional arrangements for joint planning by Government and voluntary organisations in developing programmes for the benefit of children and youth are not frequently found. To remedy the tendency for planning to be highly centralised, the Government established in 1954, in the interest of effective community development, Regional Development Committees in various parts of the country bringing together Government field officers and representatives of voluntary organisations for the purpose of assessing needs and planning programmes for the economic and social development of the rural areas. These Committees have generally made an impact on the community and although proposals for their re-organisation are now being examined, it is the consensus of opinion that there is need for a formally constituted planning body functioning at the regional level.

62. Full use is made of the services of international bodies in formulating and implementing policies and plans. The U.N. and its various agencies as well as the United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development and the United States Agency for International Development are always willing to help and have by their assistance in many ways facilitated and improved the process of decision-making.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

63. A great deal needs to be done to provide adequate services for the children and youth of British Guiana. Lack of developed economic resources is the main obstacle in the way of achieving this objective. Already almost one third of Government expenditure is devoted to the social services which, considering the ratio of children to adults in the population, have to be considerably increased in the future if only to maintain the existing level of welfare.

64. To put an end to large scale unemployment, for example, requires economic planning, industrial training and investment capital. Schemes such as are being devised for postponing the admission of young people into the labour force through the issue of free secondary education, and for providing training camps, will be of little avail unless rapid economic development takes place in the meantime.

65. Nevertheless, more effective use can be made of available resources if more attention is given to planning and reorganising the existing services. Catering for the needs of children and youth calls for the co-ordinated efforts of several Government and non-governmental agencies. Without organisational arrangements for such co-ordination, it is unlikely that the various agencies involved will communicate effectively with each other. A standing inter-ministerial Committee on Children and Youth is needed to ensure consultation when new programmes or changes in programmes are being planned, and co-operation after the programmes have been put into

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operation. The collaboration of Government and voluntary organisations will also benefit from the establishment of a co-ordinating body. Past attempts at forming a Council of Social Agencies comprising representatives of both Government and voluntary social welfare organisations have failed for one reason or another, but the need for such a council still exists and everything favours its successful formation if the Government takes the initiative. The Council should have a Children and Youth Division.

66. One of the main gaps in the services now provided is the absence of family casework services. Despite the recognition of the importance of the family and of the serious damage to family stability caused by social and cultural changes, neither Government nor private agencies have undertaken family services. In the course of their duties Government probation officers find it inevitable to give some help to families, particularly in the area of matrimonial reconciliation, but this is usually only a brief and superficial contact. The provision of separate casework programmes for the different categories of persons who need it is no doubt beyond the ability of the country at the present time. There is, however, much to recommend the establishment by the Government of a unified child welfare service, including programmes for family welfare, child protection, treatment of offenders and residential training. As has been mentioned earlier, steps are already being taken to examine the practicability of such an arrangement.

67. Another important gap in the services is the non-existence of facilities for the care and training of handicapped and mentally retarded children. There are schools for the blind and deaf and a convalescent home for children run by voluntary organisations with aid from the Government, but there are no services for the mentally deficient or the physically handicapped, except the recently introduced facilities for polio victims. Developing public interest in providing for such children is easier than in the case of children not so obviously afflicted and it is thus to be assumed that the time is not far distant when civic-minded groups will give this problem their attention.

68. While the provision of social services by Government ensures standardization, there is advantage in having these services decentralised. They can then be more effectively adapted to meet local needs and are likely to be better appreciated because local personnel are responsible for their administration. For these reasons it is unfortunate that the rural local authorities hardly make any contribution to the provision of social services. In his proposals for the reorganisation of the local government system Dr. A.H. Marshall recommended that the existing small authorities should be combined into large units which should be charged with responsibility for the social services in their areas. Arrangements are now being made for implementing the Marshall Plan.

69. Children are not adequately protected by the existing legislation. Legal action cannot be taken against a parent for neglect or ill-treatment of his children and social workers are powerless when dealing with parents who refuse to provide proper care for their children when well able to do so.

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A Children's Code is needed, bringing together in one Ordinance the scattered bits and pieces of legislation affecting children and including needed provisions not now contained in the laws.

70. Without adequately trained personnel it is impossible to provide the gamut of services needed for the welfare of children and youth. Government has been aware of this and has devised schemes for the training of social workers overseas. However, the salaries paid to Government welfare officers and the opportunities available for their promotion are limited and as a result these officers, especially the better trained and more experienced ones, usually seek appointments in other fields. The high turn-over of staff has been one of the main drawbacks to improvement of these services. The voluntary services are even more seriously beset by personnel difficulties through their failure to provide adequate salaries. It seems necessary that the Government provide satisfactory career salary scales for social workers and assist the voluntary organisations, as is now done in the case of the private secondary schools, in providing appropriate salaries for their workers.

The urgent need to train more social workers can be satisfied by developing a local school of social work. There are enough suitably qualified persons in British Guiana to make this a feasible proposal. Discussions have been held with the University of Guiana in this connexion and it is expected that the university will agree to accept responsibility for the proposed school.

In a rapidly changing society, welfare programmes no matter how well conceived and executed soon become inadequate or obsolete. Existing welfare programmes in British Guiana have in the main been patterned after examples in the United Kingdom where conditions are different and resources are more abundant. With independence just around the corner, it is necessary that all services should be re-oriented to accord more closely with the country's needs, capabilities and aspirations. In this respect pride of place must be given to the services for children and youth not only because of the part which must be played by the young in building the future, but also because most of the population are minors.

SUMMARY

I. NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

1. Gastro-enteritis and Colitis, usually the third to fourth highest cause of death for all ages, is the chief cause of infant mortality in British Guiana.
2. The general nutritional state of children is satisfactory, but there are minor deficiencies resulting from a diet low in B-complex vitamins chiefly riboflavin and niacin.
3. There are no facilities for the institutional care of physically handicapped and mentally retarded children.
4. Public Assistance grants are inadequate and are provided in accordance with outdated policies.
5. Housing shortages are serious in Georgetown and in the areas affected by the recent intercommunal disturbances.
6. Government is under great strain providing educational facilities to keep pace with the rapidly growing child population. There is a considerable backlog of school places to be provided.
7. The emphasis in education should be changed more expeditiously in favour of more technical training.
8. Resulting mainly from a distaste for farming and the drabness of country life among young people, there is a significant population drift from the rural areas to the City.
9. Changes in the customary pattern of village life have tended to be unsettling to village youth.
10. Cultural changes in the rural Indian family tend to create friction between the generations and the high percentage of illegitimacy in the lower income Negro families affects the proper care and training of children.
11. Juvenile delinquency though generally on the decrease has risen sharply in the makeshift "squatter" communities which have developed as a result of the intercommunal disturbances.

/II. MEASURES

II. MEASURES ADOPTED TO MEET NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

1. The Health Services provided by the Government include a practically free national medical and hospital service as well as programmes for environmental welfare and maternal health, school health, dental health and mental health. Hospitals and dispensaries are also provided by the sugar and bauxite industries and the Georgetown municipality runs a creche and two infant welfare centres and offers a public health service.
2. Potable water supply is available to most of the inhabited parts of the country and there is a milk pasteurisation plant in the City. A School feeding programme supplies snack meals and milk to primary school children.
3. Public assistance grants totalling \$700,000 are given to 7,500 children under 16 years old.
4. Voluntary organizations providing institutional care for orphans and semi-orphans receive grants from the Government.
5. Programmes for industrial youths include apprenticeship and cadet-training schemes supervised by a Board of Industrial Training, craft and agricultural training in all-age schools, and a Government Technical Institute and an Agricultural College.
6. Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14 years and optional between the ages of 15 and 16 years where accommodation is available.
7. Primary and all-age schools are provided by both Government and various religious denominations, but all schools are supervised by the Ministry of Education and the Government pays the salaries of all Teachers and provides grants to the denominations for equipment and the upkeep of their school buildings.
8. A scheme for erecting school buildings by self-help has been launched and enthusiastically accepted by the rural communities. Food assistance from the World Food Programme is available to self-helpers.
9. Home economics and handicraft training is provided in the all-age schools and home economics is taught in 3 of the girls secondary schools.
10. The University of Guiana with faculties in Arts and the Natural and Social Sciences proposes adding departments in Geology, Sociology, Business Administration, Caribbean Studies and History of Political Thought.
11. The preventive, rehabilitation and delinquency services include a Probation Service, two approved schools (one for boys and one for girls), juvenile courts, a remand home and after-care services. Government contribution to the Youth Service includes the provision of a Youth Organiser and other staff attached to the Community Development Division, grants to voluntary youth organisations, training programmes for youth leaders, and built up camp sites for the use of youth organisations.

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12. There are several voluntary youth organisations, some of which are large and properly equipped with buildings and staff. Almost all youth organisations are affiliated to the British Guiana Assembly of Youth.

13. Industry (sugar and bauxite) also provide services for children and youth, including organisers and leisure time facilities.

14. Rural local authorities scarcely make a contribution to social services. The Georgetown municipality makes a greater contribution.

III. POLICY AND PLANNING

1. Legislation providing for or effecting the care, protection or training of children is scattered among several ordinances.

2. Some of these ordinances contain provisions which sometimes operate indirectly to the disadvantage of children.

3. Full use is made of research in the planning process. At present most of the research is carried out by experts from overseas provided by the United Nations or the United Kingdom and United States.

4. National development plans aimed at promoting economic development are prepared from time to time. Provision for the social services are included in these plans.

5. Government takes the initiative in most of the planning of programmes for children and youth, Voluntary bodies are usually associated with the Government in the planning process.

6. Regional Development Committees comprising Government officers and community leaders have been established in the rural areas to assess needs and plan programmes at the regional level.

IV. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. In view of the growth of the proportion of children and youth in the population, rapid economic development must take place if the existing services are to be improved or even maintained.

2. Better use can be made of available resources by reorganising existing services and providing for effective coordination of effort. There should be an interministerial Committee on Children and Youth and a Council of Social Agencies with a Children and Youth Division.

3. The feasibility of a unified Child Welfare Service, including a family casework service, is being examined.

4. Civic-minded groups should be encouraged to provide institutional care for the physically handicapped and mentally retarded children.

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5. There is need for a Children's Code containing more adequate provisions than now exist for the care and protection of children.
6. With the implementation of the Marshall Plan, rural local authorities will be given a greater share of responsibility for the provision of services for children and youth.
7. A school of social work should be established for the training of social workers. Government should provide satisfactory career scales for its social workers and assist voluntary organisations to pay better salaries.

