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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 World Health Organization

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Summary of the Report on Cuba
prepared for

THE LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN AND
YOUTH IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Needs and Problems of Children and Youth;
Measures Adopted to Date

It is estimated that at present Cuba's population numbers 7,630,000 inhabitants. In 1964-65 the population increased at the rate of 26.4 per thousand, bringing the population density up to 64.9 inhabitants per sq. km. Urban population is estimated at 57.7 per cent of the total.

Cuba's population is young, it being estimated that over 55 per cent of the total is under 25 years of age.

In general terms, economic development plans are addressed to promoting family stability and establishing incentives as to family responsibility toward children and youth. The lack of all types of discrimination coupled with the opportunities open to all create the proper climate for the Cuban family to fulfil its important duties.

Public Health. It is necessary to continue increasing hospital services, and the number of physicians, dentists, nurses, nurses aides, laboratory technicians and other health personnel.

To date the general mortality rate of children in the 1 to 4 years age group has dropped from 3 per thousand in 1959 to 1.7 per thousand in 1963.

/Deaths caused

Deaths caused by acute gastroenteritis have decreased to the present rate of 30.6 per thousand.

Polio has ceased to be a childhood scourge in Cuba; in 1963 and in 1964 only one case per year occurred, both children being noninnoculated.

The mortality and morbidity rates from tuberculosis and intestinal parasites have dropped considerably.

Notable achievements have also been attained with regard to such diseases as diphtheria, tetanus and malaria; in 1964 the incidence of these diseases per 100,000 inhabitants being: diphtheria: 8.8; tetanus: 4.6; malaria: 8.6.

The Government has also been active in hospital construction, 66 new hospitals having been completed between 1959 and 1964. The ratio of hospital beds per thousand inhabitants has risen to 5.7. The rural medical service has also improved considerably with the construction of 38 new hospitals and 122 new dispensaries.

Nutrition. It is necessary to accelerate agricultural and industrial growth with a view to making more complete nutrition available.

School lunch rooms operate and have increased as have workers lunch-rooms.

Nutrition programs are under way and nutritional education and guidance are imparted, taking full advantage of all mass communications media.

Housing. The Government has addressed its efforts to the annual construction of 100,000 dwellings with a view to supplying the 1,200,000 new dwellings which it is estimated will be required by 1975 due to the population increase.

Education. It is necessary to continue increasing the quantity and quality of education and to completely eliminate school drop outs.

Government endeavours in the field of education have been aided and supported by the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba Revolucionaria and its affiliated unions.

Education has been declared a state duty; all educational establishments are nationalized and a broad scholarship program makes education available at all levels. The scholarships not only provide free education but also include lodging, board, clothing, school equipment, etc.

Educational centres of all levels have been provided in all areas of the country.

/Preprimary education

Preprimary education is imparted at 163 "Círculos Infantiles" which combine the activities of creches and infants schools as children may attend from the age of 45 days to 6 years. In addition, pre-primary education is provided in primary schools, the number of classrooms for this purpose having increased greatly.

Primary education has increased greatly both as to number of classrooms, which now total 36,313 and as to enrolments: 1,323,989 for 1964-65. The shortage of teachers has been partially solved by directing "school inspectors" and teachers of special subjects into general teaching, and partly by calling for volunteers, to whom on-the-job training is imparted. To date results have proved satisfactory, particularly with regard to the low ratio of drop-outs and failures. An effort is being made to make the sixth grade the minimum level of education for all workers.

Secondary education has also increased greatly as to enrolments (135,745 for 1964-65) and general availability. All education at this level is politechnic in nature and associated with the developments of the country's various areas through contact with farms, factories, etc. Any population centre having 2,500 inhabitants has at least one secondary school.

Technical education is addressed to the training of the technicians and skilled workers required by the country. These offer industrial, and agricultural training at various levels and in different fields of specialization; there are also management, accounting and language courses offered at this level.

The improvement of higher education has not been neglected and efforts are made to raise its academic standards, to increase scientific research and to encourage scientific exchanges with other nations. Enrolments are also on the increase, being 17.8 per cent greater in 1964 than in the previous year.

Considerable attention is given to vocational guidance.

In addition to the greater number of schools at all levels, literacy campaigns have been undertaken (in 1961 707,000 illiterates were taught to read and write), and follow-up courses have been implanted. Major cultural plans, popular libraries, etc., all serve to increase the general level of education.

In schools physical education is compulsory.

Protection and General Welfare. Over 120,000 scholarships per annum ensure that education at all levels is available to all.

The work of minors is forbidden.

/The social

The social security system assures medical, dental and hospital attention, assistance in kind (food, medicines, orthopedic and other apparatus), and in cash (for childbirth, disease, accident, inability, funeral expenses, etc.).

There are special schools for physically and mentally handicapped children.

Prostitution has been eradicated.

Special centres have been created for the care and rehabilitation on juvenile delinquents.

A special system has been established for the legalization of extramarital unions and their progeny.

Policy and Planning. The Central Planning Board (Junta Central de Planificación) is responsible for national planning and the general co-ordination thereof. The general guidelines are designed by the Cabinet Council.

Financing for housing and community services, education and culture, health, research and social services for 1965 amounted to 36.11 per cent of the National Budget; 11.63 per cent of the National Budget was invested in education and culture and 5.54 per cent of the National Budget was devoted to Public Health.

The principles which govern Cuba's planning with regard to children and youth were clearly established in the First Havana Declaration: "...the right of all children to education... the right of the sick to medical and hospital care... the right of youth to work... the right of students to free, experimental and scientific education... the right of people to convert their military fortresses into schools."

The promotion of children's and youth's health, education and welfare are assured.

Great achievements have been attained with regard to education, health, physical training, sports, recreation, increased family income, etc., all of which affect children and youth directly. A great deal still remains to be done.

The Revolutionary Government plans to increase agricultural and industrial output, to increase the productivity of labour, to build dwellings, bridges, highways and the general material basis for successful socialism.