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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

Santiago, Chile 28 November to 11 December 1965

SUMMARY  
of

the Report prepared by Panama

Introduction

Panamá has a total population of 1,200,000 inhabitants.

The infant mortality rate is high - 47.5 per thousand.

Housing conditions are precarious: in 1960, 41 per cent dwellings lacked adequate water supplies; 36 per cent lacked sewage disposal facilities; barely 44 per cent of all dwellings had electric light; 55 per cent of dwellings in Panama City are no more than slum rooms with communal water supplies and sanitary services. The situation has improved somewhat since that time due to the action of the "Instituto de Vivienda y Urbanismo" which, with funds supplied by international agencies, plans to build 6,000 one-family dwellings within the next three years.

Migration from rural to urban areas is considerable and has led to housing, social and unemployment problems. Efforts are being made to combat the trend by plans which improve the conditions of rural life.

Health

During the first two years of a child's life gastroenteritis and colitis constitute one of the most serious health problems.

/Following in

Following in order of importance as diseases affecting childhood are hookworm, intestinal parasites, pertussis and measles.

Later in life nutritional deficiency diseases appear (kwashiorkor, multideficiency diseases and anemia).

Respiratory diseases are common, and tuberculosis should also be mentioned as a disease affecting children and youth.

Leprosy and yaws have minimal incidence.

In 1963 the country had 492 practising physicians and 775 nurses; their geographic distribution is poor, so that the ratio is 10.4 physicians and 17.5 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants in Panama City, and drops to 1.4 physicians and 1.2 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants in Veraguas.

In 1963 there were 22 hospitals and 6 clinics with rooming-in facilities, and 43 Health Centres including Mobile Units.

The total number of hospital beds numbered 3,750 (approximately 4 per 10,000) and 574 infant cribs. It is estimated that approximately 50 per cent of services provided by government hospitals is extended to children and youth.

Urban medical centres, specialized hospitals, social security assistance and medical campaigns in isolated areas have increased greatly in an effort to take care of the needs of children and youth.

### Nutrition

Surveys carried out in 1954 and in 1958 indicate that both the caloric and protein intake of the average diet are deficient, and that protein intake particularly should be doubled.

There are two extended nutrition programs under way. One is sponsored by CARE jointly with the Ministry of Education, and is a program for the distribution of powdered milk and yellow cheese through the country's primary schools and health agencies. In conjunction with this program the School Restaurants subsidized by the Municipal boards provide children with oatmeal, corn gruel and one other course.

The other program, known as the Program on Applied Nutrition, is sponsored by UNICEF, jointly with the Ministries of Education, Public Health and Agriculture. This program covers 41 primary schools in 4 provinces and takes care of some 11,180 children. It encourages the consumption of vitamins to be found in vegetables through domestic and school truck gardens.

/Education

## Education

National education has advanced considerably over the last 50 years. Elementary education is compulsory and state education is free of charge.

21 per cent of the country's total population attends an educational establishment of some sort.

Pre-primary level. There are 90 establishments of this type (state and private) with a total enrollment of 255,227 preschoolers, and a total teaching staff of 9,352 persons.

Primary level. There are 1,503 establishments of this type (state and private) with a total enrollment of 196,412 children which virtually takes care of all the present 7 to 12 years of age population. Teachers at this level total 6,481 including teachers of special subjects.

Secondary and vocational level. There are 164 schools (state and private) which provide education at this level to 50,936 children (out of a 13 to 18 years age group numbering 150,567 children). The teaching staff numbers 2,514 persons.

Supplementary education is provided for 3,202 children in 54 establishments having 169 teachers in all.

Special education (for blind, deaf-and-dumb and mentally retarded children) is provided in 5 establishments with a total teaching staff of 49 teachers, who care for 401 handicapped children.

In general it is necessary to increase facilities at all levels to cover increasing needs (estimated at a total 12,000 children more per annum) and to absorb the backlog of some 37,717 non-enrolled children.

Curricula should be re-examined in the light of national needs.

## Social Conditions

A 1964 survey indicates that approximately 17.2 per cent of the country's active population is constituted by children and youths from 10 to 19 years of age (despite the fact that children under 14 years are forbidden to work by law).

A serious social problem is caused by improperly constituted families (lacking either father or mother) and by the high illegitimacy rate. The latter situation is particularly serious in the cities. In country areas non-marital unions generally imply the father's care and responsibility towards his offspring.

/The delinquency

The delinquency rate is fairly high (1 arrest per 67 inhabitants in 1964) particularly in Panama City and Colon. Out of a total of 18,669 arrests in 1964, 520 were due to cases of juvenile delinquency, the main offenses being theft and bodily injuries. Most juvenile delinquency takes place in the towns; in rural areas such offenses are virtually unknown. Most of these delinquents come from improperly constituted homes. Juvenile delinquents are subject to the jurisdiction of a special court (Tribunal Tutelar de Menores).

Private institutions such as Lions International, the National Red Cross, etc., provide children's parks, swimming pools, summer camps, a rehabilitation centre for juvenile delinquents, nurseries for the children of working mothers, etc. The Scouts also do meritorious work. Many private enterprises generously assist social welfare activities.

Great efforts are being made to extend water, sewage and power facilities.

Intensified farming and settlement plans are under way in an effort to stem rural migration.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare aids orphanages and nurseries.

Approximately 20 per cent of the population is affiliated to the social security system.

The country has advanced legislation for the protection of minors in general.

Several development plans which will have a direct impact on the country's childhood and youth are under way: General Health Plan (1962-1970); Short Term Community Development Plan (1965-1967); Applied Nutrition Plan (1963- ); Robles Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Stockraising; Housing Plans (1963-1970) and the School Building Plan (1963-1970). Most of these plans have foreign financing.