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THE FAMILY VIS-A-VIS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND
ADOLESCENTS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

presented by

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1. THE FAMILY

1-1. Significance and importance

The family is the first and most effective tool which moulds the human being. It is within the family environment that the psychic, behavioural, moral, affective, social and cultural characteristics of every individual develop.

It is this environment, with its powerful natural links of affection, that most often provides the exclusive framework for teaching the child a mode of behaviour, a sense of values, self-discipline and the code ruling in society.

The family is a group of persons fundamentally united by affection, the emotions, habits, traditions and hereditary traits, which creates and determines responsibilities, particularly of an economic nature. After the instinct for preservation and procreation comes love for the child, another instinctive impulse which is magnified and embellished.

The family prompts men and women - particularly the latter - to carry out the most difficult tasks for the good of others rather than of themselves, and to undertake heavy responsibilities.

The whole art of living is interpreted and transmitted to the child through the parents, and family life must be experienced to be understood. It influences the entire life of the community in innumerable ways and any changes in it will be felt throughout the social structure (R.M. MacIver-Charles H. Page, Sociology, p. 249).

1-2. The role of the family

Its main role is that of an agent for the socialization of children, adolescents and young people through the inculcation of standards and values which they slowly absorb and come to accept.

It socializes and educates the younger generation through language, religious, moral, mental, physical and work training with the purpose of preparing it for adult life.

It has a decisive influence in moulding the character of children and forming their habits, thereby shaping their individual personality.

Hence, families with the same background mould thousands of human beings who react in the same way to an indefinite number of values, approve or disapprove of the same situations, strive for identical aims and exert the same pressure on all other groups.

/1-3. Functions

1-3. Functions of the family

The main functions which the family had years ago have gradually diminished in importance, since they are no longer necessary in the new social structure. For example, its governmental, protective and legislative functions have passed into the hands of the State through its representative organs. The responsibility of the modern nuclear family applies to only a small group consisting of the wife and young children. Religion has now ceased to be a family function and churches have replaced the private chapel. Education has also become an important public function, carried out by public and private schools and universities. Likewise, such recreational functions as dancing and singing previously enjoyed in the family circle are today absorbed by the city through the establishment of a great many places and forms of recreation outside the home (clubs, cinemas, cafés, race-courses, sports stadiums, swimming-pools, etc.).

The family's economic functions have altered radically, in its capacity as a unit of both production and consumption. The family income is forthcoming from paid work done by its members, which is generally performed outside the home, in offices, workshops, factories, etc. The health functions of the family have been transferred to medical care institutions which provide scientific and technical services.

In short, the functions of the family can be said to have been transferred on an increasing scale to other social institutions; nevertheless, whatever its predominant nature, the fact that it is a complex and interrelated group undoubtedly gives rise to unceasing inter-action with nearly all other groups, which it influences and by which it is also influenced.

The family has been seriously affected in structure and role by the radical changes that have inevitably taken place in society. The most notable of these relate to its functions and, in particular, to the evident undermining of paternal authority by the growing recognition of women's and children's rights.

Owing to the close relationship between society and the individual, the former has become a kind of super father, inspecting, controlling, directing and replacing the functions previously carried out by the father of the family.

1-4. The urban family

The urban family presents the essential characteristics of a small group, based principally on affection, which ascribes importance to the emotional basis for marriage relations.

As noted above, the nuclear family has lost a good many of its functions. Its predominance is disappearing as a result of competition from other institutions, which take care of the child from kindergarten

/to university.

to university. Its importance lies in shaping the child's personality in relation to values and standards. This is now the family's most important mission.

The urban family satisfies its economic needs through services of all kinds provided by the city. For this purpose it relies on a wage or income to cover expenditure on housing, food, clothing, etc. The income is obtained by the head of the family and his wife.

The urban family's most important function is concerned with adequate nutrition, hygiene in food and in the home, adequate clothing and the special care required by children. These basic duties cannot be transferred to other institutions.

The modern urban family no longer regards its own wealth as sufficient to protect it economically owing to the demands of present-day living. Technological progress, the division of labour and other factors compel the parents to provide their children with a profession that is in line with their interests and will at the same time enable them to earn their own living.

1-5. The rural family

The rural family has been influenced to a lesser degree by social change and transformations and, therefore, has retained the status of a primary group.

Its economic functions have changed through the impact of industrial development. Formerly it supplied all its own needs (bread, dairy products, cereals, fabrics, etc.).

The rural family usually covered its subsistence needs with the resources at hand. The position has now altered owing to the construction of roads, highways and railways, and in general the expansion of transport and communications (aircraft, radio, telephones, etc.). This has brought the country closer to the town, while at the same time facilitating the purchase of manufactured products which have now reached all rural areas. Food, utensils and clothing are all produced outside the home.

Industrial development seeks to simplify the family's economic activities; it has already fully achieved this in the urban sector and its influence is being felt - albeit on a much lesser scale - in the rural sector, too. Nevertheless, the situation in the rural area is very different as regards cultural content and appreciation of the meaning of life.

The rural dwelling is a projection of the countryside, since this can be said to penetrate into the home. The barn, pig-sty, stable, chicken-run, etc. are still attached to the family dwelling.

/The rural

The rural family is still largely a production unit. The work of sowing, harvesting and, in general, all agricultural activities are performed by the family group with the active participation of the women and children. The care of domestic animals and other tasks which fall to them constitute one of the reasons why rural children are so early incorporated in the family's production activities. (In Mexico, Chile and other Latin American countries they start on work of this kind before the age of eight.)

As a consumption unit, the rural family maintains its functions practically intact, since it generally retains its food habits even if its resources have dwindled. Although rural families have access to more items for home consumption than urban families, since they build their dwellings with local materials, obtain their food from the rural medium and make their clothing from local raw materials, their position is nevertheless precarious. As a rule, the family is economically dependent upon the landowner, and its wages - which are very low - are normally paid in the form of perquisites for use or consumption (housing, grazing, animals, sowings, etc.).

Owing to his ignorance and lack of training in agricultural activities, the rural worker is undoubtedly exploited; he obtains low yields, fails to make good use of the resources offered by the countryside and also lacks real protection from the State. Furthermore, he is not accustomed to saving, does not invest his small earnings wisely and mismanages his economic life (with lavish celebrations of religious feasts, births, wakes, etc.).

As stated by Berta Corredor in her book on La familia en América Latina (p. 114), "the almost sub-human conditions under which the majority of rural families exist are due not only to the low incomes they earn, but also to misuse of the resources available and to the cultural habits they have inherited". Families with a high percentage of indigenous blood commonly use their earnings irrationally since, according to the author, a considerable proportion of their income is expended on alcoholic beverages and celebrations.

The woman plays an important role in the rural family, since as a means of supplementing the family income she has developed a number of cottage industries which in some countries have been incorporated in the regional markets. These industries have spread on organized lines and their products have already entered the exchange market and constitute a trade flow (Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, etc.).

"Moreover, the woman plays an active part in the work of sowing, harvesting and storing the crops, besides taking care of poultry, pigs and the production of dairy products, basket-work, ceramics, weaving, etc." (op.cit., p. 110). Unfortunately, her lack of knowledge prevents her from making better use of the plot of land worked by the family in order to raise its nutrition levels.

The inadequate systems of land tenure, the irrational working methods, the lack of agricultural training, of incentives and recreational facilities, and other deficiencies present serious structural problems in the rural areas which affect huge sectors of Latin America.

The prevailing subsistence economy, the ignorance with respect to agricultural training, and the lack of orientation and purpose in the rural sphere are factors which, taken altogether, prevent the rural family from emerging out of its state of inferiority and stagnation as compared with the progress which the urban family has achieved in some sectors.

1-6. The present-day family vis-à-vis the requirements of the developing community

The economic development process consists essentially in expanding the production capacity of all sectors of social activity on a varying scale. It is expressed in terms of per capita income.

Man is the prime agent of economic development; hence, the better trained he is, the better will be his performance and the more effective his ability to co-operate in development plans.

National development involves not only the economic, but also the social, development of a country and relates mainly to:

- (a) Raising the levels of living;
- (b) Eradicating extreme poverty;
- (c) Extending the social services.

The development process in itself is highly complex owing to the close interrelationship existing between the various factors involved. Thus, political, economic, legal and social influences make it difficult to draw a dividing line between purely economic and other questions.

Accordingly, a reasonable and well-balanced line of action has been followed, i.e., that of integrating social policy with economic policy in order to attain the desired targets namely, community well-being and a better life for all.

On the one hand, it is difficult to tackle the economic problems with the analytical instruments at hand and, on the other, economic science cannot on its own provide definitive answers to such problems as optimum income distribution; and adequate appropriations for education, housing, health, recreation and other social services. Thus, it becomes necessary to consider the raising of living levels at once as an end in itself - or a process of growth - and as a guide for the economic and institutional process.

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On the basis of this set of purposes and aims, the question might be asked what role does the family play as a factor influencing national development. How does it meet the needs of a developing community in inculcating a sense of responsibility to society.

If it is accepted that the ultimate aim of national development is the progress of mankind, which involves the development of all man's abilities so that he will attain the complete physical, mental and social well-being that will enable him to benefit from such progress, development at the national level should take place at the earliest stages of the life of a human being. Does this happen in practice? As noted above, the situation of the urban and rural family in Latin America is not, as a rule, in line with this approach.

A brief analysis of the real economic and social situation of these family groups in the region will help to clarify this important question. The following are some of the salient factors which in one way or another influence the situation.

(a) Population explosion. Latin America has at present a higher population growth rate than any other major world region. This means an increase in the number of economic and social problems, such as the need for more housing, transport, education, etc., and gives rise to problems which directly affect the family. It is estimated that in the next decade the annual rate will have reached 2.7 per cent.

(b) Health. Health is a factor of prime importance in safeguarding the national well-being. The problems most often facing a family and influencing its development are: child health (the high child mortality rate), infectious and contagious diseases, epidemiological diseases, the heavy incidence of abortions, etc. One of the most serious problems undoubtedly affecting the family because of its social implications is alcoholism.

The Latin American governments are endeavouring to improve the populations' health through a policy of medical care which is already showing results (longer life, a reduction in child mortality, the eradication of certain epidemics, etc.).

(c) Housing. There is no doubt that housing is the biggest problem the Latin American family has to face because of the accompanying social repercussions. Over-crowding and promiscuity of children and adults are among the factors which threaten family stability. The uncontrolled population growth, combined with population shifts from the country to the town, are the raison d'être of the many shanty towns (callampas, favelas, villas miseria, etc.) that have sprung up around the major cities. In Chile, according to a 1964 National Health Service report it is estimated that some 600,000 families live under sub-human conditions of absolute promiscuity, in conventillo rooms, shacks, callampas, etc. A similar state of affairs exists in Brazil, Argentina, Peru and other countries of the region.

/(d) Education.

(d) Education. Education, in its broadest sense, is an exceptionally important factor in the family's development. It includes not only instruction but more especially the development and inculcation of skills that are necessary if a person is to earn his living efficiently.

It is of vital importance for the economic and social future of the Latin American populations that there should be contingents of workers trained at the professional, technical and other levels to co-operate in national development.

Regrettably, in this respect, there is still a high proportion of illiteracy in the Latin American family, despite the pooled efforts of Governments and public and private sectors, combined with the action of international agencies, which strive on a common front to overcome this problem (the implementation of UNESCO's basic plan for Latin America represents an effort to attain those aims).

The lack of educational establishments, the shortage of teachers - due in part to the low salaries paid -, the family's precarious economic situation combined with the parents' irresponsible attitude to the need to educate their children, the early age at which minors start work, and other causes are responsible for the low educational level prevailing in the region.

What, then, is the future of these young people who lack the elementary scientific, technical and manual training to take an active part in the tasks that should be conducive to national development?

(e) Nutrition. Adequate nutrition is of particular importance if the family and its members are to develop normally. There is a very close relationship between intelligence, vitality and nutrition. The deficient diet of the Latin American populations is one of the determining factors of their economic and social under-development.

While the accepted average is 2,500 calories per capita, in Chile it is only 2,200. In 1962 avitaminosis and deficiency diseases caused more deaths than poliomyelities; 6 per cent of the population suffered from chronic undernutrition and the problem is aggravated by the number of children who are growing up in a permanent state of undernutrition.

If the almost complete lack of any proper recreational facilities for children and adolescents, the environmental sanitation deficiencies and the socio-economic problems arising from the existing low wages are added to the material circumstances which impair the Latin American family, it will be seen that the picture it presents is anything but encouraging. Under these circumstances, how can the family be considered a useful instrument capable of co-operating in the attainment of national development?

Inasmuch as the economic factor presents the complex characteristics of a social biological problem, its consequences weaken and destroy the constitution of the family group. Why, then, is an effort not made to improve the situation of the family with that specific aim in view?

Latin American society is going through a crucial time. It is being forced to adopt all kinds of measures aimed at changing the existing social structures. In fact, no effort is being spared to modernize the community. Stress is laid on the urgent need to introduce agrarian reform; the reform of legal institutions and tax reform; to institute more rational public administration systems; and to streamline both public and private services, as indispensable measures for going ahead with national development plans. In short, what are aimed at are far-reaching structural reforms in institutions which for centuries have ruled the lives of these populations.

In the face of this huge undertaking, which does not always yield positive results, it might be asked whether, if at the same time the accent is placed directly on the family nucleus with the purpose of improving its conditions and raising its level of living, this could contribute in some measure to the improvement of society as a whole.

It would be true to say that the improvement of the basic cell or family, repeated a million-fold, would help to raise the over-all level of living in Latin America.

As stated by Sorokim, the influence or power of each separate family is in itself very small and is incapable of influencing the course of history or sociological affairs; but families of the same type in the aggregate have an enormous influence which is virtually unequalled by that of any other group linked up by single or multiple ties.

2. NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

2-1. Needs

There are few problems in the world which call forth so unanimous a consensus of opinion on the necessity of solving them quickly and effectively as that of the care that should be given to children and adolescents by the society in which they live.

A number of questions suggest themselves in this context. What place do the younger age groups occupy in the scale of values which determines priorities for the solution of the problems springing up around them? Is the future human potential that children represent the starting point for the Latin American governments' approach to the study of their needs and the solution of their problems as part of national development plans? What importance attaches to the family's active or passive participation in the development process? or, to put it another way, how can the existing family unit contribute to the progress of the Latin American peoples?

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Considered in terms of the 500 million children growing up in the developing countries, of their welfare, of their pressing needs and of the indispensable means to the end constituted by their happiness, the problem seems quite insoluble. What hope is there for the investment of substantial sums specifically in the care of children, minors and adolescents, if both national and international resources fall short of what is required for the attainment of national development objectives in the areas that are lagging farthest behind? It may feasibly be supposed that economic development must be accorded priority if lasting benefits, including those of a humanitarian character, are to be obtained.

In this connexion, a UNICEF report (1964) points out that since so numerically large a proportion of the human race is concerned, the answers to such queries cannot but affect the future of the whole world, especially if it is borne in mind that from the ranks of the children of today must emerge the planning experts, industrial and commercial supervisors, administrators and all the other key personnel who will programme and direct economic affairs in the coming decades.

But if the family is held to be the proper environment for the formation of the child's personality, the crucible in which the character of the grown man of tomorrow is cast in an unalterable mould, and if at the same time facilities are provided for its members to develop skills and aptitudes which will enable them to take their place in the march of economic and social progress within a relatively short space of time, then, and only then, can a positive reply be given to so burning a question.

Some of the needs of children and adolescents are outside the scope of the existing social services, and others they do not suffice to cover; similarly, certain family needs call for specialized attention which they do not receive, so that there are serious deficiencies in the care of the family.

It is a fact that preventive and constructive action does not reach the points where apparently no problems exist. For centuries the Latin American family has been self-sufficient as regards all its primary needs. It has not expressed or given evidence of any other aspirations. It has remained static in the face of progress, incapable of keeping pace with world development, chiefly for want of proper guidance towards more efficient utilization of the resources of the environment; for lack of education and training with which to face life; because of the complete absence of recreation facilities both in urban centres and in rural areas; for want of standards and values in relation to the supreme significance of family life, etc. All these aspects are of decisive importance in the formation of human personality.

/As Gino

As Gino Germani says, from the moment of its birth the child is plunged into a differentiated social world, belongs to a certain people, to a particular class, that is, finds himself in a group endowed with specific historical and social characteristics. Hence the roles whose introjection is part of the process of formation of his personality are those that the environment offers. In so far as the people surrounding him are carriers of specific forms of culture, the roles he assumes will correspond to the patterns peculiar to his social sector. In order to live in a modern society a certain level of education is indispensable; those who have not acquired it lead a sub-human, parasitic existence, clinging to the fringes of the economy. Education is necessary in order to become a complete human being. The child is born male or female, but it does not receive its personality ready-made. As the author quoted goes on to remark, every individual, on his own account and with varying measures of help from others, must forge a personality for himself. He must acquire a behaviour pattern which gradually shapes him as a member of the human race. Otherwise, he will not be a complete human being; he will be a cripple.

The attainment of this objective, therefore, is a responsibility incumbent upon every organized society. To turn the millions of beings who struggle along in sub-human conditions in the Latin American region into integrated personalities is a commitment which all the governments, in greater or lesser degree, are making efforts to meet, through a multiplicity of measures designed to improve the economic and social structure of the Latin American countries.

If attention is confined to the situation in respect of children and adolescents, their needs within the family and the response the latter makes, concern for its improvement may be said to have existed for some years past in various sectors, although the emphasis has been laid on palliative and remedial rather than constructive and preventive measures.

In Chile, the official movement began with the first Congress for the Defence of Handicapped Children and Adolescents (Congreso de Protección a la Infancia y Adolescencia Desvalida) held in 1913; the private sector had long been active in this field.

By now, a number of stages have been passed on the road to complete protection of minors, at any rate at the theoretical level. Through a series of Pan American congresses concerned with child welfare, a body of relevant legal principles has been built up. Careful study has been devoted to public health, education, housing, welfare services and social legislation; but although stress has been laid on the importance of the family in the development of children's personality and as a pillar of society, the study and adoption of practical measures to

/strengthen the

strengthen the family unit itself has not been gone into nearly as thoroughly. No integrated policy in relation to care of the family, children and adolescents has been formulated and ratified by all the countries of the region.

One of the characteristics of the family is its permanence as a basic social institution. The changes it undergoes are very slow, and derive from radical metamorphoses of society. On the other hand, as an association of individuals it is transient, and this is the respect in which direct and immediate modifications can be introduced through the application of measures deliberately directed to that end.

As Erich Fromm says, man is his own creation; but he is still a natural phenomenon, whose specific form is determined by the social organization in which he lives.

Hence the need to introduce changes in the said organization in order to raise and improve the level of living of the family and of the children belonging to it, first at the national and then at the regional level.

If the family, both in urban and in rural areas, struggles out of its state of stagnation, with adequate motivations to urge it on, and assimilates ideas relating to human welfare; if its images of national development and social progress are clearly defined; if it is trained to understand the new variables of all kinds that are involved in the advance towards improvement, and can play an active part in the process; only then will it be possible to say of Latin America, with Medina Echavarría, "Fara dá se".

The specific needs of children and adolescents in their normal environment - the family - are listed below.

(a) Basic. These comprise food, clothing, housing, health requirements, and, in general, all the necessities referred to in connexion with the family unit.

How are families placed in these respects, and how far are the needs in question covered by community services? Their satisfaction is incumbent upon the social services that every organized society possesses. Since many well-documented United Nations studies are available on this subject, it will not be touched upon here.

(b) Psychological. The need for affection is fundamental in human life, and a number of studies have shown how one of the major causes of individual maladjustment is the lack of the special loving care which children need and are not always given.

Habit formation is indispensable for the development of personality, since the child must acquire a measure of discipline in study, work, and behaviour, to enable him to steer his course in life.

/He also

He also needs recognition and encouragement of his efforts, and fair appraisal of his work, to inculcate in him awareness of duties, rights, obligations, etc.

Recreation has so essential a role to play in the formation of character that private institutions and governments alike are taking pains to establish far-reaching programmes in this field. It is recognized that both adults and children need a way of escape from the things they are obliged to do, so that they can enjoy self-expression, freedom of spirit and the sense of living fully during their leisure hours. In an article appearing in the Revista de Servicio Social, 1964 (a publication issued by the Escuela de Servicio Social Dr. Alejandro del Rio Dr. Finlay says that the concept of recreation is sufficiently broad to include not only play in all its manifestations, but also many other interests, such as music, drama, handicrafts or any free activities, especially those of a creative nature, making for better patterns of living. Such is the importance of recreational facilities, and yet how absolutely lacking they are in Latin America!

(c) Educational. Educational needs assume a leading role if the aim pursued is effective participation in national development. The family group, however, does not always assign them their true importance.

They are of two kinds: basic education, which is given in educational establishments, and the deficiencies of which have already been noted, and the special training which enables the family group

To have a better chance of leading a useful and satisfying life;
To develop aptitudes and skills whereby fuller advantage can be taken of available resources;
To acquire elementary notions of food values, home management and the usefulness of a family budget, etc.

(d) Juridical. Requirements in this field are various, and their satisfaction makes for the maintenance and preservation of the social order. Thus, for example, legitimization tends to stabilize the family and prevent tension among the children. Adoption provides children with a home. Legislation on desertion of the family, payment of maintenance allowances, and so forth, affords direct protection to the family, but at the same time, in the last analysis, safeguards the social order.

(e) Social. It is socio-economic needs that cause the worst suffering in the large families that are characteristic of Latin America, seriously affecting the normal development of children.

They are reflected in low wages, under-employment and unemployment, overcrowding, malnutrition, disease and want of every kind, which make it impossible for the family to emerge from its present sub-human status.

These and other ills besetting the Latin American family generate deep-rooted problems that are extremely difficult to solve, since they are related to the region's institutional structure. Until this is remodelled, and until something has been done to improve the nucleus of society - the family - the measures adopted will be mere palliatives.

2-2. Problems

The problems that most directly affect children, adolescents and young persons are those of psychological and family origin.

(a) Psychological. This term covers a wide range of situations, of which only one will be accorded special mention on account of its repercussions within the family.

This is the problem relating to the independence of the adolescent.

Young people at the present time are standing at a crossroads. They are free to choose their path, but there are no signposts to help them; they have no leaders to follow, no representative heroes in whose footsteps they can tread. Worst of all, they have no satisfactory family standards which meet the requirements of today.

In the first place, the repercussions of technical progress make themselves felt in almost all spheres of life, most directly affecting young people whose families were not prepared for such changes. Secondly, the requisites of their environment (the cinema, broadcasting, television, etc.) exert an enormous influence on the behaviour of the younger generations. They spare no effort, legitimate or otherwise, to fling themselves into this new way of living, without any sort of training, without cultural or family guidelines to follow. This is the cause of many cases of maladjustment, rebellion and irregular behaviour. It is the anthropological basis of the problems of adolescents.

(b) Relating to the family. Family problems proper are directly and closely linked with the following factors: the constitution of the family; the high index of illegitimacy, which in Latin America exceeds 60 per cent; the very low socio-economic and cultural levels prevailing; the large number of children in each family, etc. Another of the most serious causes is the disorganization of the family, which gives rise to a great many conflicts, especially in the case of abandoned children and children in abnormal or irregular circumstances. The latter term has not yet been accurately defined, but in essence it covers children who are

Neglected;
Abandoned;
Uncared-for and in moral and material danger;
Homeless;
Exploited;
Juvenile delinquents. These are in a special category inasmuch as they have police records.

There are numbers of measures and institutions for the care of such children. The most widely differing groups, in both the public and the private sectors, are interested in solving the serious problems they present. It is regrettable that since no integrated policy has been formulated which envisages the child and its family as a united whole, the measures adopted generally tend to draw children farther and farther away from the family environment.

3. PRESENT RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE FAMILY FOR MEETING THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF MINORS AND ADOLESCENTS

3-1. Resources

It is a recognized fact that the care given to children in a country depends on cultural characteristics, and on the level of economic and social development, and that the higher the levels concerned the better will be the facilities and services available to meet the needs of the family.

The establishment and availability of the social services provided in any organized society, such as education, health, housing, nutrition, etc., are to be found in varying degrees in most of the Latin American countries.

By means of periodic conferences organized by national institutions and United Nations agencies, detailed analyses have been made at both the national and regional levels, in relation to certain specific aspects, and also in the form of an over-all study of the situation in the Latin American countries.

The loss through neglect of the priceless potential asset for future development represented by the younger generation is considerable, from several standpoints; in education, for example, one of the main problems in the region is the loss of intellectually gifted individuals, who neither have the resources themselves, nor have any hope of assistance from others, to enable them to continue their education at a higher level.

Similarly, in the health field, there is a loss of human life, and poor performance because of dietary deficiencies. There is a close correlation between illiteracy and low income, ignorance and poverty, physical weakness and productivity, and this shows the urgent need for adequate resources to deal with all these problems.

On the one hand are the material resources, in the form of the social services represented by such community services as hospitals, behaviour clinics, sanatoria, schools, colleges, universities, libraries, museums, social welfare institutions, etc., and the machinery and technical equipment needed for their proper functioning.

As for human resources, they are insufficient in both quantity and quality, in terms of the needs of children and adolescents in particular. There is a great shortage of professional and auxiliary staff in the field of services for children who need expert attention. There is a lack, in particular, of magistrates for juvenile courts, social assistants, psychologists, doctors, teachers, etc.

3-2. General and specialized legislation

Throughout the Latin American countries there is a body of laws to regulate the social system, containing general provisions for the protection of the family and of children (constitutions, codes, etc.). There is also special legislation on such subjects as the right to work, the protection of the family and of children, etc., which has been enacted as the need arose. Thus most of the countries of the region have extensive legislation in this field, establishing the right to protection of children in general, and in some cases of the family.

3-3. Specific legislation

In most Latin American countries there are, in addition, specific acts relating to the welfare of children and the family, in connexion with the establishment of specialized agencies. Although such acts do not yet constitute an organic body of laws, the prevailing trend is towards a special branch of law relating to children, or law on families, as it is sometimes termed. Such specific acts cover many different subjects, for example, the acts on assistance and welfare of school children (Chile, 1964), which covers all school children from the age of 7 to 15 (up to the age of 21 for gifted pupils who lack funds). Under this legislation students can receive financial and other assistance to permit them to continue their studies.

Legislation on abandoned children. The aim of such legislation is to prevent one of the most frequent causes of the breakup of the family. The desertion of children is established as a crime in the legislation of several Latin American countries.

The right to food. The aim is to maintain the physical well-being of children by ensuring that they are properly fed, by means of legal penalties.

Sale of alcohol. Legislation prohibits the entry of children into establishments that sell alcohol drinks.

Family allowance. The legislation aims at strengthening the situation of the large family.

Prenatal allowance. Legislation assists the mother, especially in cases where the father of the unborn child has deserted her.

These and other legal provisions are intended to protect the physical and mental well-being of children. But what is needed is a legal statute with respect to children and the family that, by bringing together all such provisions, would protect the family, and should safeguard it from any foreseeable hardship.

In so far as the community has sufficient social services, as the funds available are sufficient to meet existing needs, and as there are means of co-ordination that ensure the best use of such resources, it can be said that there is an efficient social welfare system.

However, this does not happen in practice, since there is an ever-increasing number of unsuccessful applications for admission to hospitals, schools, and social institutions of all kinds. This phenomenon is characteristic of developing countries.

The provision of material and human resources to deal with problems relating to the breakup of the family deserve special attention. These are mainly families who have been deserted, and children in need of special care and protection, and because of their serious nature have been given priority. The high maintenance costs are paid by the institutions responsible for the children concerned. A distinction must be made between children deprived of a normal home by circumstances beyond the control of the parents, and children who have been voluntarily placed in special institutions or foster homes by their own families.

Children in need of special care and protection, or guilty of antisocial behaviour, are a subject of continuing concern in Latin America, less because of the reason for these problems than because of the deplorable consequences for the welfare of the child.

In brief, there is a proliferation of institutions for the protection of children, but their general lines do not represent an integrated welfare policy in this field.

In most of the Latin American countries the question of funds for the welfare of children and the family are regarded as a matter for the private sector, and only incidentally of concern to the public treasury. Moreover, most of the programmes of the institutions that look after the interests of children relate to the specific problems concerned (orphans, abandoned children, delinquency, mental and physical handicaps, etc.) rather than to a general line of planned and co-ordinated action for the children's welfare.

Governments subsidize such institutions, and follow their activities with interest, but thus far it has not been possible to establish effective co-ordination between these institutions in the private sector and the similar institutions financed by the State.

Apart from a few exceptions, the Latin American countries do not have a central office devoted exclusively to the study, analysis, investigation and treatment of the needs of children, adolescents and young people in their normal environment, the family.

4. BASES FOR AN INTEGRATED POLICY FOR THE CARE OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

4-1. Aims and purposes

On the basis of the close interrelation between the progress of society and that of the family, the following conclusions can be reached.

The strengthening of the family in its many aspects, with special stress on meeting the needs of children and adolescents, is today one of the most direct means of achieving social change. In so far as the basic cell of society, the family, progresses, and as the millions of such cells that make up the great Latin American family can reach the same or similar levels of living, then there will be a general raising of standards in the region.

A family able to meet the needs of its members in a manner that permits them to realize their potential and, with the help of the educational system, to participate not only in the drawing up but the execution of social welfare plans, is unquestionably a family that is co-operating both passively and actively in national development.

But, as we have seen, this is not the situation as regards the family in Latin America. Although broad changes are being made, a stereotyped Latin American society still persists that is no longer consistent with the people's legitimate expectations of a better life. If an individual does not succeed in attaining liberty, spontaneity and the full expression of his personality, he may have some serious defect, but if millions of people are in the same situation, we must admit that the defect is imposed by society (Erich Fromm). The individual shares this defect with others, with a myriad others, and does not feel that he is different, beyond the pale. This is the image of the disinherited Latin American man, the peasant, the slum dweller, the sub-proletarian, identifiable not only by his poverty and wretchedness, but also, essentially, by his lack of freedom to realize his personality, organized solidarity and active participation in such a process as the economic and social development of his country, of which in fact he knows nothing and cares less.

We can say that national development has the aim of improving not only the country's economy, but at the same time the welfare of the individual, in all its aspects. But to obtain the best results it is essential that the training for a better life should begin at the first stages of life. Is this the case in Latin America? Indeed it is not.

One of the great problems facing not only government, but also politicians and directors of national and regional planning is, in fact, how can the necessary changes be brought about? Medina Echavarría, the sociologist, considers that one way of obtaining the long-desired changes would be through "social action", in other words, by attacking social injustice. He advocates the establishment of a social policy in defence

of what he calls the supreme human values (see "Report of the Expert Working Group on Social Aspects of Economic Development in Latin America", Economic Bulletin for Latin America, Vol. VI, N°1, pp. 55-64).

One economist, Mr. Higgins, takes the view that one cause of the problems of under-development is that too many people live in backward sectors and regions, and he believes that geographical mobility between countries would greatly help to overcome under-development. (op. cit., p. 204.)

In fact, Governments are more or less committed to promote and accelerate the necessary changes by such radical measures as land reform, tax reform, educational reform, and reforms in the field of housing, health, nutrition, etc.

Among this group of measures, a major step in effecting changes must be to satisfy the needs of children and the family, in order to train the younger generation to play an effective part in national development. The family, in its triple role as the psychological mould, the agency of social change and the promoter of social development, can exercise a powerful influence in accelerating social changes.

As a character-forming agency its importance goes beyond the first stages of childhood by teaching standards and values that become ingrained, and make themselves felt at a later stage through the behaviour of the individual in society.

As an agency of social change the family fulfils its task by gradually drinking in the lessons involved in the change from a mainly rural life to an urban industrial life, and absorbing modern technology. This process is necessarily attended by conflicts and tensions. It may be that values and attitudes are not sufficiently modified in line with the new patterns involved in the changes, and that the resulting tension and failure to adapt endanger the steady economic growth, and even the very stability, of the society concerned.

The family, if properly guided and prepared for these changes, can act as one of the most effective instruments to smooth the sharp corners and obstacles inherent in change, and reduce to the minimum the tensions that stand in the way of change.

The family acts as a promoter of development in so far as it encourages the changes that will permit attainment of the country's economic and social development. It can promote the technical training of its members and take an active part, as a group, in economic and social development, thus taking on an important and perhaps decisive role in the country's economy.

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Hence it is clear that there must be a national and regional policy for the strengthening of the family, based on systematic, organized and continuous action aimed at the desired ends. A policy of this kind requires, in the first place, uniting the efforts of the existing institutions for the protection of children and the family, and in the second place, once some degree of national development is taking place, the decision to make the necessary changes and to arouse the nation to awareness of the priority that should be given to effecting these changes.

It may appear at first glance that this involves a policy of waste that the peoples of Latin America cannot as yet afford. Problems such as a large-scale rise in production, the modification of the agrarian system, the expansion of industry, the amendment of the tax systems, undoubtedly deserve more attention, but the question arises, is it not in fact individual men that achieve the progress of whole peoples? And if the human potential that the child represents remains entirely in the hands of a family that is not equipped to make the child part of this progress, and co-operate in national development, does this not amount to the countenancing of an unforgivable waste? It would be clearly irresponsible not to provide properly, with a far-seeing eye to the future, for the needs of the younger generation who tomorrow will be the builders and leaders of economic and social progress in Latin America.

Quite apart from considerations of a humanitarian, philosophical and moral order, that are beyond argument and have always been accepted in theory, the foregoing considerations of a practical order make it clear that the best investment that Governments can make within the next five years is to take the measures indicated above.

The joint efforts of Governments and institutions in a common action to be applied simultaneously all over Latin America must necessarily take the form of a policy to strengthen the family.

A. AIMS of such a policy: to raise and improve the level of living of the family and its members in order to ensure that they will co-operate in national development and world progress.

B. SPECIFIC AIMS: to strengthen the family, integrate it into the community, and ensure that it participates both passively and actively in national development.

C. MEANS: family education, community organization and development, and social service.

There now follows a brief description of each of these instruments.

1. Family education. This must stress action to prepare the child for family life, with special emphasis on the value of the mother as the main means of improving family conditions. This is done by (a) training of the members of the family to make better use of existing resources;

/(b) training

(b) training for the development of cottage industries, and (c) education on the nutritional value of foods, the advantages of drawing up a family budget, etc.

In some Latin American countries there are schools for family education that produce trained staff, and in others short courses are given based on practical work. In any case, technical training is available that can be used in the programme to strengthen the family.

2. Community and development. This can be defined as a conscious and deliberate effort aimed at helping communities to recognize their needs and take on increasing responsibility for solving their own problems by enlarging their abilities, in order to play their full part in the life of the nation. This is achieved through establishing community services and making efficient use of resources by means of a rational organization aimed at improving the economic, social and cultural conditions of the people. (See paper presented at the Eleventh International Social Service Conference, Brazil, 1962.)

Community development is essentially a process that is both educational and organizational. It is educational because it aims at changing the attitudes and practices that stand in the way of social and economic progress, through the creation of the attitudes that will favour such progress and generally promote increased receptivity to change. And it is organizational, not only because when the people act collectively they are more likely to be able to serve their common interests, but also because it leads to the reorientation of existing institutions or the establishment of new institutions that give more room for personal initiative. It provides the necessary channel through which government services can act. (See the Report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, October 1956.)

To obtain these results there must be effective co-ordination between the various public and private agencies in the community, and they must be reoriented and reorganized when circumstances so dictate.

3. Professional social service. This is an organized activity whose aim is to help people to help themselves and to adapt themselves in a constructive way to the community and society of which they form part. Activities are divided into individual, group and community activities.

As regards individual activities, the aim is rehabilitation of individuals handicapped by poverty, emotional or material dependence, social disorientation, etc. The aim is to investigate and channel all the opportunities and resources available to the individual for developing his initiative, and the ability necessary to solve his problems himself and operate without external encouragement.

Group work is directed towards giving the group mobility, when it is found to be paralysed by reason of internal conflicts or ignorance of the principles of organization. This work is concerned mainly with group activities that facilitate the development of the personality of children and adults (clubs, centres, etc.).

Community work consists of advising communities on how to solve the problems they face through the lack of basic services, or through conflicts arising from inability to adapt to social change. Often community development leaders and promoters are social workers whose professional training enables them to carry out practical programmes of many kinds, acting either as assistants or as those directly responsible for the programmes.

Professional social service is regarded in this report as a necessary and productive investment that does something to forestall the deplorable effects of social disorganization, while helping to change into positive factors the handicaps that beset the national economy. In general social needs are those most felt by groups of people, and it is a fact that working with people, rather than for them, is a means of mobilizing their latent abilities.

It is becoming increasingly necessary to have the technical ability to evaluate the relation between the purely personal interests of individuals, and the interests that coincide with those of national plans, in order eventually to integrate the relevant interests at the popular level with plans in the interests of the country as a whole.

The technical training of social workers is at a higher level in urban areas, where more extensive facilities are available than in the country. However, in some countries specialized training is available for social workers for rural areas. Thus, in the social service in Ecuador, students must spend some time working in the countryside, and must master the Quechua language. In Guatemala there is a school for rural social service, situated outside the capital. In Brazil there are special courses covering programmes of rural social service. In Chile the Social Service School of the Catholic University has prepared pupils for this specific type of service ever since it was established in 1930.

However, the most extensive contribution of the professional social service worker is in the urban areas, where they provide an auxiliary service to various types of agencies and institutions (hospitals, schools, industrial firms, juvenile courts, etc.) and supplement the specialized work of doctors, entrepreneurs, magistrates, etc.

Social workers may also assume the direct responsibility for welfare services, such as programmes of urban renewal, as in Brazil, or owner-building, as in Colombia, where the results are visible in the form of new

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co-operative associations for the purpose of solving the housing problem, or the programmes of public participation in Peru, in which social welfare questions are the direct responsibility of the professional social service workers.

D. FORMULATION OF A POLICY OF INTEGRATED FAMILY CARE.

If such a policy is to be effective, it must meet the following requirements: (a) it must have priority in the national plan; (b) it must be established at the government level; (c) there must be the necessary financial and legal facilities to enable it to operate, and (d) it must have an administrative organization that enables it to operate.

E. EXECUTION OF A PROGRAMME FOR FAMILY CARE AND STRENGTHENING OF THE FAMILY.

For the successful execution of a programme for the strengthening of the family, the above four requirements must be met from the outset of the programme.

Of the various instruments referred to in earlier pages - family education, community development, and social service - there are good reasons for belief that the last named is the best suited to assume the responsibility for executing a programme for strengthening the family.

1. Professional social services have existed in Latin America since 1924, when the first School of Social Service was established in Chile, named after its founder, Dr. Alejandro del Río. Subsequently social services were extended throughout the continent, and at present there are over eighty schools of social services, mainly at universities.

2. Professional social service staff are specially trained to deal with social problems. The study, diagnosis and treatment of family problems is one of their main tasks in the professional field. They have accumulated a mass of experience, during their many years of activity, both in programmes directly concerned with family welfare (emergency housing, social assistance, private charities, etc.), and in activities involving co-operation with the medical profession, industry, schools, etc., in which social work indirectly benefits the family.

3. The work of co-ordination and co-operation with other existing institutions and agencies in the community is a major feature of their activities, and permits a better use of existing resources. Similarly, their relations with other professional workers facilitate team work.

Hence social workers are the professional group best equipped to execute successfully a programme for the strengthening of the family.

On the assumption that joint action to achieve specific targets involves a successive selection, the situation might develop on the following lines.

1. 1966 would be selected as the year for beginning to carry out the programme at the national level.

2. Among the various social services that serve the needs of the community (health services, education services, municipal services, etc.), that chosen would be the service that seems best equipped to succeed.

3. The first step would be to provide guidance to families in accordance with their individual and personal qualities, rather than with the problems they present. An analysis of each family as a social group would be made, on the basis of the role played by the parents and the impact on the personality of the children.

4. The educational service, for example, might be selected as that to be responsible for the programme, since it has units all over the country in the forms of government schools and colleges, and also, even though on a small scale, its own social services. In this case the necessary equipment and materials needed for the execution of the programme would be installed (material for clubs, films, etc.).

5. The professional team would include social workers, family education specialists, kindergarten teachers, dieticians, etc. Their activities would be supplemented by those of auxiliary staff and voluntary workers.

6. Many different work techniques can be used, and can always be adapted to the conditions in each region. Thus in very poor areas, or those that are socially and culturally backward, the preliminary measures would be very simple, and would be directed mainly to strengthening the family from the financial standpoint through manual training, progressively more ambitious aims being pursued at later stages.

In areas at an intermediate level of development there could be mass family education programmes, to strengthen the role of the mother as the main means of improving the family level of living.

In the more advanced areas the group method can be used, in conjunction with community organization and development, to enable the community to take a direct part in solving the problems of children and families, and contributing to their welfare (by building a school, kindergarten recreation centre, etc.).

7. The emphasis must always be on the family and on strengthening the family, and it is in this connexion that the techniques of the individual approach, the group approach and community organization can be used. The effectiveness of the technical work and the practical results of the programme could be evaluated through periodic meetings with the supervisors of the social services, either at the provincial capitals or through visits to the centres where the programmes are being carried out.

8. The central agency responsible for the co-ordination and execution of the programme would be based on some existing machinery, at an intermediate technical level. Most of the Latin American countries have institutions responsible for protecting and safeguarding the interests of children and families. Although their activities do not reflect an integrated policy, they are at least familiar with the principal methods and, above all, the nature of this type of work.

9. Even if it is not possible to formulate a policy at the government level, such a programme could always be carried out providing that it is sponsored by and has financial and technical support from some international organization such as the United Nations, through one of its specialized agencies, UNICEF.

10. This programme, in the integrated form of a regional plan for improving the level of living of children and the family, would necessarily give results within three to five years, according to working conditions and to the places selected.

The strengthening of the family through family education, the establishment of centres for the further training of mothers and fathers, the founding of youth clubs and recreation centres, etc., and the adoption of systematic, controlled and continuing measures, can well be achieved by the simultaneous application, throughout Latin America, of the measures proposed.

CONCLUSIONS

The situation of the family and its status in society is the faithful reflection of the situation of the country as a whole. Until general socio-economic, cultural and legal conditions are improved, the family will remain at the very low level at which most of the rural and urban communities in Latin America now find themselves.

If the statu quo is preserved, and steps are not promptly taken to raise the family's level of living, it will not be able to take either an active or passive part in the process of national development.

From the work undertaken in this connexion, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. The family is the basic and most important unit in the social order;
2. The family is the best psychological mould for forming character and for teaching the rudiments of social co-operation;
3. In order to develop properly and to play its role in the country's economic and social growth, the family must be furnished with the necessary means to do so.

/The following

The following proposals are made for maintaining and protecting the family in Latin America:

1. The Latin American countries should adopt a policy of over-all family protection that would provide for the needs of children and young people in their normal environment: the family.

2. The activities of national and international organizations for the protection of children and young people should be co-ordinated so that they may take up a joint, integrated and effective stand in dealing with the problems of the family and the child.

3. There should be redoubled endeavours to improve the utilization of existing resources. More and better services can be obtained from current facilities, if institutions are co-ordinated, their aims are widely publicized and a planned exchange of views and experiences takes place.

4. The professional workers in this field - social workers, family educators, kindergarten teachers, medical specialists, magistrates of juvenile courts, etc. - should regard the family as the basic unit with which they must deal and direct their work towards strengthening and welding it together.

5. Social welfare schools, family educators, kindergarten teachers and persons working in similar fields should lay stress in their curricula on the normal family and its role in national economic and social development.

6. Research should be conducted on the problems of families, children and adolescents, their needs, economic performance and participation in economic life.

7. The family itself should inform legislators, institutions and community authorities, through the relevant media, of its problems and requirements, including those of the children, and at the same time suggest possible solutions.

8. Some of the existing organizations should be entrusted with the specific task of helping and safeguarding the development of the normal family. Suitable organizations would be the National Family Council, the Family Movement, etc.

9. As soon as possible a programme for strengthening the family should be put into effect, since in every Latin American country there is a specific profession concerned with social problems, whose representatives - the social workers - have been striving for years to strengthen the family unit.

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