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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 the World Health Organization

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SUMMARY
of

the Report Prepared by Mexico

Introduction

The population of Mexico numbers 42.8 million and is expected to increase at a 3.6 per cent per annum rate between 1965 and 1970.

It is estimated that the 0 to 14 years age group will constitute 46.8 per cent of the total population by 1970. The present birth rate is 46 per thousand.

Population density is relatively low though it is increasing rapidly, it being estimated that by 1970 it will be 26 inhabitants per sq. km. There is a considerable trend toward urban migration and a serious problem is posed by the distance between urban centres which are too small in themselves to justify the existence of proper facilities such as schools, public health centres, etc.

The average per capita income for 1963 was US\$ 362 per annum, and in general income is poorly distributed.

In Mexico a high proportion of children work. The legal age to begin work is 12 years, but many children begin before that age, particularly in agriculture.

/There is



There is a fair proportion of indigenous population (that is, peoples who only speak an indigenous tongue), constituted by 57 ethnic groups. Efforts have been made to incorporate these peoples into modern Mexico, but such efforts have been largely isolated; however, there is no racial problem.

Health

Over the last decades there has been a considerable improvement in public health services.

During 1958-1964 hospital beds increased at the annual rate of 10 per cent per annum, it being expected that by 1970 public and private hospitals will have some 100,000 beds.

Hospital attention and mother and child care have increased.

The Secretaría de Salubridad has 731 hospitals, 472 health centres, 274 rural medical services of co-operative nature, public health units, maternity hospitals, homes, nurseries, etc.

Physicians are still poorly distributed from a geographical standpoint, the over-all ratio being 1 physician to 1,689 inhabitants; nevertheless, for the Federal District the ratio is 1 physician to 596 inhabitants whereas in other areas the ratio drops as low as 1 physician to over 5,000 inhabitants.

Social Security has increased thus extending medical care to 20 per cent of the population.

There has been a considerable decrease in infant and child mortality and morbidity: diphtheria, pertussis and measles have dropped considerably and malaria is no longer a problem.

Among infants under one year of age, early childhood diseases and prenatal accidents are the main causes of death, followed by bronchopneumonia, bronchitis, gastro-enteritis and diarrhoea.

Little birth control is practiced particularly among the poorer classes, but there is an increasing proportion of illegal abortions amongst married and unmarried women, which constitutes a serious health problem, though there are no accurate statistics on the matter. The Mexican Social Security Institute has 97 centres throughout the country where health and hygiene education are imparted with a view to finding a solution to the problem.

/Nutrition

Nutrition

This is a serious problem, particularly in rural areas.

Anemia is very common, particularly in tropical areas.

In 1963 the average animal protein intake was 18 grammes per day, the acceptable figure being 75 grammes of all proteins daily, of which at least 20 to 25 grammes should be of animal origin.

The calory intake is below the figure regarded as satisfactory, the deficiency being greater in rural areas.

In addition to the general nutritional deficiency, there are endemic deficiency diseases in some areas, such as pellagra and xerophthalmia in Yucatán.

Goiter is endemic in the Sierras of the South and of the Gulf area.

In 1961 the Instituto Nacional de Protección a la Infancia (INPI) was created with a view to overcoming the nutritional deficiency problem. This agency provides free supplementary nutrition to school-children, and through the Centros de Orientación Nutricional (Nutrition Guidance Centres) supplementary nutrition is provided for pre-schoolers, and nutritional education is also imparted. This undertaking is complemented by the Instituto Nacional de Nutrición, the Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia, the social security system and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Education

In the country there are over 10 million illiterates over 7 years of age.

The educational problem is serious: in 1964, 22.6 per cent of the school age population (6 to 14 years) lacked educational services. Only a little over one quarter of the children who enroll complete their primary schooling, that is, there is a high drop-out ratio.

A large proportion of non-enrolments and drop-outs are due to the non-availability of schools, the non-existence of the proper grades, economic circumstances and linguistic difficulties (non-Spanish speaking or indigenous children). There are over 88 thousand small communities of less than 2,500 inhabitants and only 18,653 have schools. Many rural schools have only one teacher.

In urban areas the availability of schools and the teacher-pupil ratio is better but far from fully satisfactory.

/A projection

A projection of future primary education need has been prepared, and costs estimated; adding projected costs of secondary, technical or normal (teacher) education and of pre-school and extra-scholastic activities, it is estimated that by 1970 the total cost of education covering the whole school age population with an acceptable teacher-pupil ratio would require 3.2 per cent of the G.N.P.

As a long term goal, not only should all children attend primary school, but also they should receive some type of post-primary education (technical, normal (teacher training), or designed to lead to higher education). Such education should be provided in terms of national needs and possibilities.

Protection and welfare

The Mexican Social Security system is extensive; at present it covers over 20 per cent of the population and it is anticipated that by 1970 it will cover 45 per cent of the total population. It is estimated that the cost of social security is now 2.2 per cent of the G.N.P. and will rise to 3.9 per cent of the G.N.P. by 1970.

Social security provides mother and child care, education in hygiene and family planning, etc.

There are nevertheless some groups who are not covered, such as independent professionals, farmers, etc., to whom the Secretaría de Salubridad extends similar services.