

For the

**PRESS**

# ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

Agency for International Development

For release on receipt

HT-66-150  
DUdley 3-7544  
Ranft

## 5 MILLION FREE TEXTBOOKS PROVIDED FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN SCHOOLS

More than 5,500,000 textbooks have been printed for free use in the public schools of the five Central American republics and Panama under an Alliance for Progress project inaugurated three years ago.

The Regional Textbook Program, financed for the Alliance by the Agency for International Development, observes its third anniversary in June. It was started as the first major step toward implementation of a directive to the Organization of Central American States (ODECA, from its Spanish initials) to standardize primary education in the region comprising Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

Cooperating with ODECA in the project are the Ministries of Education of the six countries, the AID country missions and AID's Regional Office for Central America and Panama (ROCAP).

In the past three years 5,544,000 copies of 12 textbooks have been published for approximately 1,300,000 children and 58,400 teachers in the first four grades of the region's public schools. Included are texts on reading, language, mathematics, social studies and science. In addition, about 150,000 copies of seven teachers' guides for orientation purposes have been published. AID has contributed approximately \$3,000,000 for the project thus far.

Headquarters for the multilateral project is the Central American Regional Textbook Development Center in Guatemala City. Each book and guide is prepared at the Center by a team of writers representing all of the countries of the Isthmus. The Minister of Education of each country designates his country's representatives for each team and pays their salaries, and the costs of warehousing and distributing the finished books. ROCAP finances the operation of the Center and pays the costs of supervision, paper and printing of the pilot edition. The AID missions finance the cost of paper and printing by commercial firms in their respective countries.

Dr. Albino Roman y Vega, Secretary-General of ODECA, said that the philosophy behind the program "is simple and plain: Every child is entitled to an equal opportunity for an education -- the child in the remotest hamlet of our countryside as well as the child in our capital city."

(more)

Department of State  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20523

In a statement signaling the third anniversary, ROCAP Director Oliver L. Sause said in Guatemala City that the U. S. government is "proud" to be able to participate in the production of the textbooks. Noting that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson have cited raising the educational level of the hemisphere's children as one of the cardinal objectives of the Alliance for Progress, Sause said that the textbook program "is in full keeping with the letter and spirit of the Alliance and the U. S. government wholeheartedly endorses and supports it."

The Charter of Punta del Este stipulates "at least six years of elementary education, free and compulsory, for the entire school-age population" of Latin America as the first goal of the Alliance's educational effort.

The textbooks are modest paperback editions with large clear type and color illustrations reflecting life in the Central American region. They vary in size from 40 to 352 pages. They have been so well received that non-public schools have also requested use of them.

In process of publication this year are 2,750,000 textbooks and teachers' guides. Approximately 11,500,000 books are expected to be in circulation when the eight-year program ends in 1970. By then, all pupils and teachers in all subjects taught in the six grades of the region's public elementary schools are expected to be supplied with free textbooks. Currently the region's public elementary schools have about 1,521,000 pupils, 68,000 teachers and 17,000 teacher trainers and supervisory personnel.

An important auxiliary benefit of the project is the training of Central American specialists in curriculum development and in writing, design and production of textbooks. Such specialists are being developed at the Center under the guidance of U. S. consultants and Central American advisors.

U. S. participation and financing for the program are expected to phase out gradually as the contributions of Central American countries increase.

# # #

Prepared May 17, 1966