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Deborah Tyroler

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by Deborah Tyroler
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According to a Dec. 12 report by Rome-based Inter Press Service, about 50% of the Nicaraguan population is under 15 years of age. Health Ministry figures indicate that the infant mortality rate is 71.8 per 1,000 live births. Eleven percent of children under five years of age living in urban areas and 15.6% of children from rural areas die from severe malnutrition. An estimated 47% of Nicaraguans lack access to running water, sewage or sanitation services. Nicaragua's health infrastructure consists of 40 hospitals, 25 health centers with hospital beds and 114 without beds, and 232 medical clinics. According to the Labor Ministry, 800,000 Nicaraguans are unemployed. The national housing deficit is estimated at about 400,000 units. During the last two years alone, over 200,000 people set up about 200 new shantytown settlements in and around Managua.

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