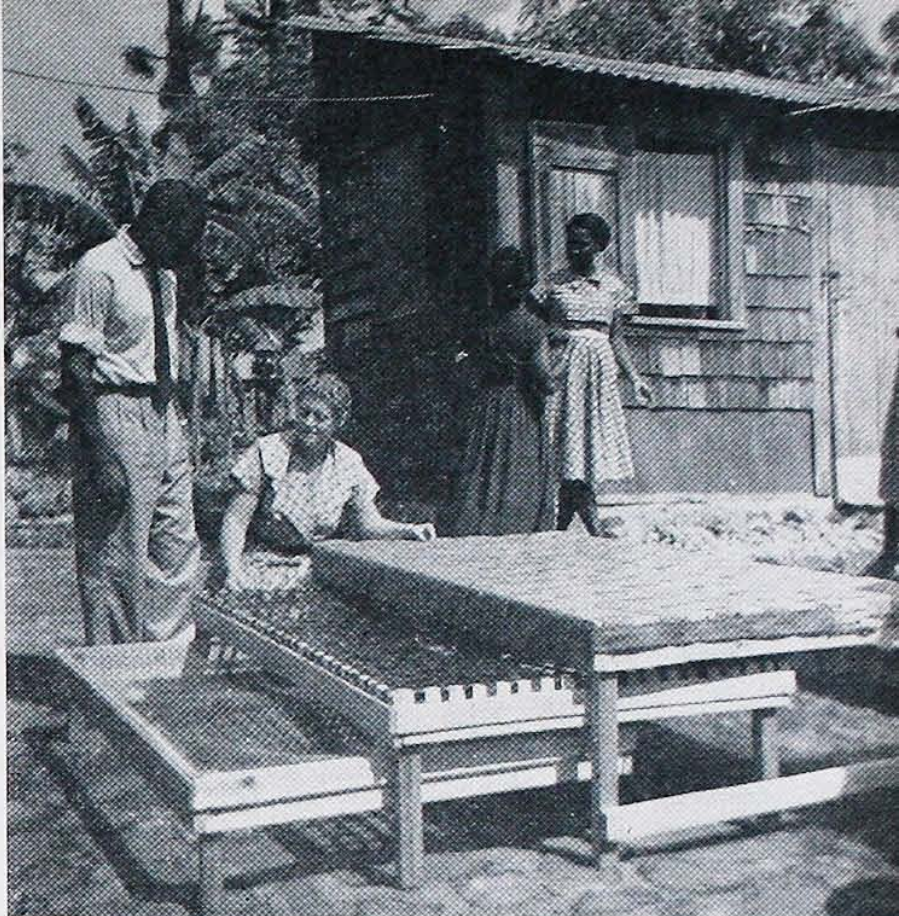


FAO Teaches Family Living

By The Editor

Beds with "springs" of chicken-wire, woven metal bands or burlap sacking, were made in different sizes to be stacked for economy of space in a small hut.



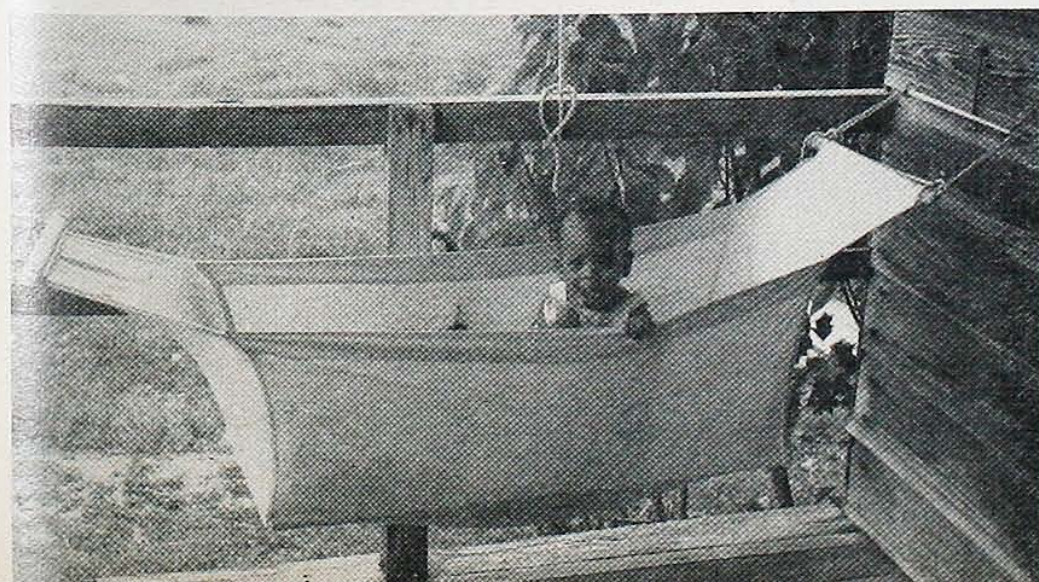
When I was in Rome this summer, I spent one of the most educational afternoons of my life with Miss Elsa Haglund, a home economist with the Nutrition Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Miss Haglund is a Swedish woman, resourceful, practical, creative and understanding. She teaches nutrition and, I imagine, almost anything else bearing on human welfare; and it seems to me that one of her projects to improve family living is an outstanding example of how an effective worker in what we call "underdeveloped countries," meets the needs of the people.

This particular piece of work was done in the Caribbean in an area where family life suffered through traditions handed down from slavery days when marriage and family ties were often taken lightly. Slave owners wanted slave children to be born but many of them discouraged slave marriages — breaking up a family when a member was to be sold was likely to cause troublesome emotional upheavals. There was also considerable delinquency among young people, obviously due partly to housing conditions that provided only one bedroom for the whole family. Miss Haglund decided to attack these problems by way of a home furnishing project.

One of the first ventures was to get the people to provide beds for their homes — a bed for the parents, one for the boys and one for the girls. But the huts were so small that three beds would leave room for little else. Miss Haglund's solution was to make beds of three sizes that could be stacked together like a nest of tables. She interested the men and the boys and girls as well as the women and taught them to make wooden frames or bedsteads with a resting surface or "springs" of whatever materials were at hand. Some were made of chicken-wire, some of strips of burlap sacking interwoven; the most satisfactory material was the flat metal banding used to tie up bales of merchandise for shipping. Special beds like little hammocks were made for babies — the father building the frame and the mother making the mattress and filling it with a local-growing moss that could be removed for washing.

Miss Haglund's next step was to get the parents to move out of the common sleeping-room. One of her ways of doing this was to show that if they had their bed in the living-room it could be made into a very good-looking day bed, with a special covering and home-built shelves and cupboards adjoining.



Fathers made frames, mothers the mattresses for this type of baby's bed.