

Economically, some 35 countries have initiated programs to reorganize their economic infrastructures, often with the support of international organizations. The resulting austerity is seriously affecting all segments of African society.

In terms of social and humanitarian assistance, Africa remains a major beneficiary of efforts to help the world's poorest countries. The activities by donor countries have nevertheless made it possible to bring many serious problems under control on a short-term basis. In the health area, AIDS is still taking a considerable toll, although it is spreading at a slower rate, and other diseases such as cholera remain endemic. Food production is very uneven, and the continent as a whole still experiences a food deficit. Little has yet been done to control environmental destruction. Finally, Africa's population (642 million) has more than doubled since the independence movement of the 1960s and will double again by the year 2010. Population growth continues to put inevitable pressure on the already precarious and inadequate economies and social systems of the various states. There has been some progress toward awareness of these problems, however, and increasing resources are being mobilized to deal with them.

Under these conditions, 1992 promises to be a year of major political, social and economic challenges for Africa. An initial solution to armed conflicts may be achieved. In terms of humanitarian needs, major efforts to combat natural and social ills have scarcely begun. Once the precarious gains in political reform have been consolidated, the problem of militarism in Africa will increasingly be the focus of international pressure. Regional integration plans will also become indispensable to maximize the impact of economic reform and to minimize the fragility of national economies. Finally, it is not yet certain whether the new political authorities will be more successful than their predecessors in reducing corruption and civil unrest. The increased progress made in 1990-91, nevertheless, suggests that the rising generation of educated young people will begin to demonstrate, in 1992, that the concept of better government is slowly re-establishing itself in Africa.