

# THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION

**T**he next time you complain about hauling home a heavy textbook or not being able to find a book in the school library, imagine what student life must be like in many parts of Africa. In many schools, there's only one textbook for every 100 students. Illiteracy and school drop-out rates are high.

The ministers of education of La Francophonie, meeting in Montréal in 1992, set out to change that: they set a goal of one book per student by the year 2002.

Other priorities are:

- support for the teaching of French;



- teacher training;
- professional and technical training;
- distance training programs.

Books recently prepared with the support of La Francophonie organizations,

such as a children's encyclopedia of Africa, are distributed in several countries. A French program developed in Viet Nam is being adapted for Creole- and Arab-speaking countries.

Training is crucial for economic development. Many young people in rural Africa, for example, don't have the technical and professional skills they need to find jobs.

Distance training programs permit institutions to collaborate and exchange teaching materials. For example, universities share expertise in fields such as health and municipal administration. ∞

# RECOGNITION FOR ACADIA

**P**articipation in La Francophonie is very important for New Brunswick's francophone population. "For the Acadian people, this is a way of recognizing that we have equal status," says Mirelle Cyr, director of co-operation for the province's department of intergovernmental affairs.

She adds there are economic benefits to attending summit meetings: "It is the only place where Premier Frank McKenna has direct access to world heads of state. We need to become more competitive, and to do business with the world. We can make contacts and our expertise becomes well-known."

Fishing is an important part of the economy for many members of La Francophonie. But many countries need to improve knowledge in areas such as fish processing techniques, navigation, safety procedures, and the management of fish stocks so

that overfishing doesn't occur.

New Brunswick, which has a well-known fishery school, is funding a network of similar schools in La Francophonie countries. The first step will be to identify the schools and their specialties. The network will create links between schools, encouraging the exchange of knowledge, teaching materials and teachers.

New Brunswick has also launched a four-year project to help women in a rural area of Benin become more economically self-sufficient. The project will help women learn to read, borrow from a bank or credit union, do market studies, and set up small co-operative businesses. For example, they could dry or can mangoes, which are currently only eaten fresh.

Women from New Brunswick who own small businesses or have other skills will travel to

Benin. Women from Benin will come to Canada. They will learn from each other. Ms. Cyr says, for example, that women in Benin may not have sophisticated technical knowledge, but they are very skilled at organizing and sharing responsibilities.

But it is the University of Moncton's International Centre of Common Law in French that really put New Brunswick on the Francophonie map. The centre offers a variety of French-language courses on common law. Some countries which are members of both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, Canada, Mauritius, Vanuatu and St. Lucia, use common law. Some countries do not use common law, but do business with countries that do. The university also has a legal translation centre which recently translated the constitution of Mauritius from English into French. ∞