

## The Environment

The natural resources of Africa, the land and its vegetation, are being consumed at a rapid and accelerating rate. The most terrifying consequence — desertification — has been described as the African equivalent of a polar ice cap marching south, freezing Canadian crops and animals. The debate continues as to whether the desert is growing mainly as a result of intensifying drought or because of environmental damage inflicted by man. Whatever the cause, it is certain that bad land management is reducing the use that can be made of the rain that does fall. Environmental protection and development, including controlled land use, soil conservation, and reforestation programs, are essential parts of any plan to prevent recurrent famine in sub-saharan Africa.

## Population

Africa currently has the highest rate of population growth in the world. Among the effects of this situation have been the overloading of agricultural land and cancerous urban growth. Development experience over the past 30 years has shown that population rates can be reduced dramatically by improving the basic health, education and employment opportunities of the poor, and of women in particular. These are among the very best investments in development that the governments and the men and women of Africa can make.



*Village in Mali*