

WESTERN AFRICA

A REGIONAL APPROACH

• BACKGROUND

Canada began to assist public development in Western Africa only after the wave of independence in the early 1960s. Co-operation, originally limited to education, has since expanded to include assistance with human resource development, agriculture, infrastructures, fisheries, protection of natural resources and the environment. More recently, Canada has lent support to structural adjustment programs, the democratic process and the strengthening of society.

Canada's total budget for Western Africa, which was only a few million dollars in the 1960s, totalled over \$200 million in 1992-1993.

Canadian programs in this region have been concentrated in the following countries: Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Ghana. Canada has also supported co-operative activities in almost all other countries in the region, but on a more intermittent basis.

• A REGIONAL VISION

The Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) long-term strategy, as set out in *Africa 21: A Vision of Africa for the 21st Century*, recommends adopting a regional approach, while giving priority to the establishment of democracy and support for entrepreneurship.

There is a broad consensus on this approach among a large number of organizations, including the Organization of African Unity, the Africa Leadership Forum and the Global Coalition for Africa. According to these organizations, increased regional integration and co-operation is one of the key factors for achieving sustainable development in Africa.

There are many challenges to be faced in Western Africa, and co-operation must adapt to the new realities. By adopting a more regional approach, future co-operation with countries in the region will be able to provide an appropriate response to these challenges.