AFRICA
INTO THE 80’S

Immense problems must still be overcome as Africa enters the Third Development Decade. But throughout the continent, nations bubble with the ferment of development.

Africa, the second largest continent where some 450 million people, in over 50 countries, are unevenly spread over 30 million square kilometres of deserts, savanna, bushlands and rain forest. In 1945, only four countries in all of Africa ruled themselves. Today, all but two territories shape their own destinies. Almost without exception they face problems as gigantic and as diverse as the continent itself and the majority rank among the poorest countries of the world.

The development strategy for the 1970s — the UN Second Development Decade — called for an annual increase in the Gross Domestic Product of developing countries of at least six percent, a growth in per capita GDP of 3.5 percent, and a growth in agricultural production of four percent. In African countries, the per capita growth in GDP averaged only 0.2 percent and agricultural production increased far less than the population. Africa has the world's lowest literacy rate and its people have the shortest life span.

This is not to say that Africa is stagnating. Development is occurring and progress is being made on a number of fronts. IDRC is participating in that effort, as this, the last of the IDRC Reports regional dossiers, illustrates. And as strategies are being mapped out for the Third Development Decade, the Centre will continue to assist the nations of Africa in their development efforts. At last October's Board of Governors meeting, it was, in fact, decided that the poorest countries, particularly those of Africa, would be a focus of IDRC support.