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**Population, debt:**

The trouble **spots**

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Kenya is one of the few countries

to emerge with any credit from

the World Bank’s report of the

sub- Saharan African economies,

but the warning signs are there

for the future.

There are only nine countries

in sub-Saharan Africa which

have shown a percentage growth

in GNP of two per cent or more

since 1965. They include Kenya.

But during the 1980-87 period,

the Kenyan economy had a negative growth of 0.9 per cent.

The decrease in growth was

not unique to Kenya, with 21

other African countries showing

a negative growth rate greater

than one percent, but it was a bad

shock to a country that had experienced considerable growth

before.

For Kenya, the most worrying

areas are the continued population expansion and the increasing

debt. The country now has the

highest percentage of children

under five in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although the population increase is now starting to decline,

the country’s population is predicted to rise to 37 million by the

end of the decade, 15 million

more than at present.

In 1987, Kenya’s debt or US $4.978 billion represented 64 per cent of the country’s GNP, an

increase of 25 per cent on 1980.

While this was less than that of

22 other sub-Saharan African

countries, it was a high burden

for any country to bear.

Kenya stands up well in the

field of education and health care

compared with other African

countries and has one of the best

statistics of nurses per population, but there is still only one

doctor per 10,100 people.

In 1987, the Kenyan Government spent 23.1 per cent of its

expenditure on education, 6.6 per

cent on health and 9.1 per cent

on the military.

One of the country’s biggest

-concerns is the rapid increase in

deforestation, which is now the

seventh highest in sub-Saharan

Africa with the loss -of 67,000

hectares of forest a year.

The World Bank report praises

Kenya’s attempt to diversify its

production away from primary

products, such as coffee and tea,

and in particular into

horticulture.

“Productive land In Kenya has

become scarce relative to the

growing supply of labour,” the re

port states. “In this situation,

horticultural cultivation, by making intensive use of both land arid

labour, is highly appropriate. It employs about 20 per cent of the

labour force (1.8 million people)

during the harvest season and it

provides small scale landholders

with an additional source of in.

come and improved food security.

“Kenya, which had almost no

flower exports. 15 years ago, is

now the world’s fourth largest ex

porter of flowers. Roses; orchids

and carnations are the most

popular.”

Kenya’s breweries also receive

praise for their efforts to move

from exports to neighbouring

countries to overseas markets.

The World Bank says that

African entrepreneurs will be able

to increase their export markets

the more easily they can travel

and transfer their foreign ex

change earnings, but whether this

will happen after 1992 and the

Single Market in Europe is open

to doubt.

One of the country’s biggest

success stones, the World Bank

says, is in the field of small enter

prises. “In the past decade, employer it in Kenya’s urban informal sector has been growing

rapidly.

“The growth of this sector has

been the main factor holding

down increases in open urban unemployment.”

In the 1970s, Kenya opened its

transport sector to competition,

with the result that matatus were

recognised and allowed to

organise an association to represent their interests. But this was

‘banned recently when matatu

drivers attempted to raise fares

above the ceilings set by the

Government.

The Government has made

sustained progress in encouraging small-scale manufacturing

and the repair enterprises known

as Jua Kali. Simple sheds

equipped with power, water, public telephones and rest rooms

have been established through

the support of the Government,

NGOs and local banks.

“By providing essential infrastructure while maintaining informal linkages and proximity to

local markets, the Government is

enabling small-scale manufacture

and repair services to organise

produce r or savings co-operatives

Lo improve their access to capital

and technology,” the report

states.

The ability that Kenya has to attract hundreds of thousands of

foreign tourist because of its stable political environment also receives praise, although the report

warns that “considerable re

sources should be attracted to en

sure the protection of the

environment”. -

The World Bank Warns that

one of the biggest threats to Africa’s future survival is Aids, which

could devastate the young educated population in sub-Saharan

Africa.

The World ‘ Health

Organisation estimates that more

than a million people in Africa.

are affected by the HIV virus and

that 30 per cent of these will

evolve into Aids cases in a few

years.

‘ The countries most affected

are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda,

Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire.

“The treatment of Aids patients

will increase demand on weak

health-care systems in the countries to which it spreads,” the re

port warns.

“To combat Aids, resources likely to be diverted from e

treatment and control of other

important diseases. Different

models show the death rate rising

from 20 to 100 per cent in be

tween two and three decades.”

The World Bank says that

apart from increased pan-African

and regional trade co-operation,

African countries should do far

more to investigate mineral ex

traction. “Africa is well endowed

with minerals and so far only a

fraction of this wealth has been

extracted,” the report states.

But above all, the World Bank

states that the 4-5 per cent

growth rate that African countries need to develop must be sustainable and equitable.

“To ensure Africa’s future welfare, the next generation must

first build solid foundations for

sustainable and equitable growth:

Sustainable because care must be

taken to protect the productive

capacity of the environment and

equitable because this is

condition both for political ability and ultimately for sustained growth.”