Chapter 9
Africa South of the Sahara

Chapter Overview

Africa South of the Sahara is a region of tremendous diversity and natural beauty, yet it is also a region with profound and widespread problems. Despite having a wealth of natural resources, political instability, ethnic divisions, environmental problems, and health crises have combined to make the people of region among the poorest in the world. Half of the population lives on less than one U.S. dollar a day and the region’s overall economic strength relative to other world regions has declined over the past fifty years.

The region is arguably the most culturally complex of the world regions. More than 1,000 languages are spoken here, the majority of which belong to the Niger-Congo group. As with language, there is a great diversity of religion. Numerous traditional animistic beliefs are widespread. Islam is strongest in the north and east and Christianity is found throughout the rest of the region. The region’s tremendous religious diversity has not been a source of widespread conflict as many faiths coexist peacefully. Life in Africa South of the Sahara has been profoundly shaped by external forces. Expansion of Arab Muslims from Southwest Asia in the seventh century A.D. affected both the culture and economic organization of the north and east. Starting in the 1400s European powers established many coastal outposts which facilitated slave, ivory and gold trade. European colonial control eventually grew to encompass the region. It was not until the 1950s that most African colonies began to achieve political independence.

Tropical climates dominate Africa South of the Sahara. The climates and ecosystems of the region form roughly parallel zones around the equator, where tropical rainforest dominates. Beyond this zone are the large expanses of savannas. Semi-arid and deserts environments are found at the periphery of the region. Only extreme southern Africa does not have a tropical climate. The physical landscape is dominated by large plateaus and river basins. Eastern Africa contains a series of rift valleys, located along a divergent plate boundary. Africa has an abundance of underused natural resources and, although the climate is conducive for growing crops, the majority of soils are poor in nutrients. Forest and fish resources are also available throughout portions of the region. Major environmental problems include drought, tropical disease, desertification, decline in soil quality and threats to wildlife resulting from expanded farming and forestry activities.

Political issues have long been important in the region. Political independence did not ensure local change as, in many places, authoritarian colonial rule was succeeded by authoritarian local rule. It was not until the 1990s that the region saw widespread shifts to multiparty constitutional democracy but many of these newer governments have struggled with issues such as enormous debt and tribal rivalries. Since 1980, the region’s population has grown from 380 million to 690 million, largely the result of dramatic decreases in death rates. The population is overwhelmingly rural, but urban centers are growing rapidly. HIV/AIDS affects over 30 million Africans and is arguably the most important population issue of the region. Life expectancies have dropped dramatically in the worst-affected countries. Primary activities such as agriculture and mining dominate in the region, although countries in the East and South have growing tourism industries. In 2005, world leaders announced a focus on poverty reduction in Africa focusing on increased aid, debt forgiveness, and trade liberalization.

There are four subregions in Sub-Saharan Africa: Central, Western, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Central Africa is the least developed of these subregions. Following independence, most
Western Africa has tremendous diversity in climate ranging from tropical rainforest to desert. All of the countries in the subregion became independent between the late 1950s and early 1970s with the exception of Liberia (1847) and all but Côte d’Ivoire had long periods of control by dictators. For the past twenty-five years, almost all countries in the subregion have experienced economic decline. As with Central Africa, agriculture is the dominant economic activity. The coastal states of Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire all have oil and natural gas deposits, with Nigeria being the leading producer. Manufacturing accounts for a small portion of the total economic output and service sector employment has been slow to develop. Overall economic development has been hampered by civil wars and government mismanagement throughout the region.

Eastern Africa contains two internal groupings: Ethiopia and the Muslim countries in the north, and former British East Africa colonies surrounding Lake Victoria. Agricultural is dominant and farm exports account for the majority of the subregion’s exports. Manufacturing consists of between 5 and 13 percent of the GDP for Eastern African countries. Kenya has a growing tourist industry, drawing around one million tourists per year in the early 2000s.

Home to the region’s only midlatitude climates, Southern Africa has conspicuous economic and political differences. South Africa is by far the dominant power in the subregion, accounting for more than 75 percent of the GNI PPP. In spite of its wealth, South Africa struggles with the economic legacy of apartheid as the black majority, while growing in affluence, still lag economically behind their white counterparts. Political strife has plagued other countries of the subregion: civil wars ravaged Angola and Mozambique during the last quarter of the twentieth century and the land redistribution implemented by Robert Mugabe has crippled Zimbabwe’s economy. Southern Africa is the most ethnically diverse African Subregion and South Africa has a sizable nonblack population. As in the rest of Africa South of the Sahara, agriculture dominates, although extensive mineral deposits are found throughout the subregion. Through the combination of power utility and transportation systems, South Africa unquestionably dominates manufacturing in Southern Africa. In addition, service industries are on the rise in Southern Africa, including tourism related to the subregion’s national parks.

Chapter Outline

Point–Counterpoint: Africa at the Crossroads
Personal View: A Brighter Future in Ghana
Personal View: Rwanda
Geography at Work: Social Justice in South Africa

I. A New Dawn?
   A. A Heritage of Resources and History
   B. Clear Boundaries
   C. The Challenges of the Present

II. African Cultures
   A. African Ethnic Diversity and Shared Cultures
   B. African Groups and Empires
   C. Muslims in the North and East
D. Colonial Regimes
   1. Slave Trade
   2. Explorers and Colonies
   3. Colonists Who Settled: South Africa
   4. Other Colonists Who Settled
   5. Colonial Government

III. Natural Environments and Resources
   A. Mainly Tropical Climates
   B. Changing Climates
   C. Ancient Rocks, Rifts, and Volcanoes
   D. Ancient Plateau Landscapes and Major Rivers
   E. Forests, Savannas, and Deserts
   F. Resources
   G. Environmental Problems
      1. Drought and Desertification
      2. Soil Quality Losses
      3. Threatened Wildlife
      4. Killer Tropical Diseases

IV. Global and Local Changes
   A. Politics of Independence
      1. Cold War and Subsequent Pressures
   B. Population Pressures
      1. Growing Numbers
      2. Population Distribution
      3. Urban and Rural Shifts
      4. Human Rights and Women’s Roles
      5. Better Education
   C. HIV/AIDS Pandemic
   D. Economic Challenges
      1. Global Connections
      2. Raw Materials, Multinationals, and the World Trade Organization
      3. Tourism
      4. Interregional Cooperation
      5. French Links
      6. Local Emphasis
   E. Can Africa Claim the Twenty-First Century

V. Subregions
VI. Central Africa
   A. Countries: Politics and Ethnicity
      1. Rwanda and Burundi
      2. Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC)
      3. Other Central African Countries
   B. People: Ethnicity
   C. Economic Development
      1. Dominant Agriculture
      2. Forestry, Fishing, and Mining
3. Emerging Manufacturing
4. Transportation is Vital

VII. Western Africa
   A. Countries
      1. Changes Following Independence
      2. Nigeria
   B. People: Ethnicity
   C. Economic Development
      1. Primacy of Agriculture
      2. Forestry, Fishing, and Mining
      3. Manufacturing
      4. Services

VIII. Eastern Africa
   A. Countries
      1. Ethiopia and Neighboring Countries
      2. Former British East Africa
   B. People: Ethnicity
   C. Economic Development
      1. Agriculture Is Central
      2. Variable Manufacturing Development
      3. Services and Tourism

IX. Southern Africa
   A. Countries
      1. Republic of South Africa
      2. Other New Countries
      3. Former Portuguese Colonies
   B. People: Ethnicity and Migration
   C. Economic Development
      1. Agricultural Diversity
      2. Mining Wealth
      3. Mining Wealth: South Africa
      4. Mining Wealth: Other Countries
      5. Manufacturing Contrasts: South Africa
      6. Manufacturing Contrasts: Other Countries
      7. Services

_Themes/Perspectives for General Discussion_
1. Why is Africa South of the Sahara the world’s poorest region?
2. Examine the colonial and ethnic boundaries portrayed in Figure 9.4. What have been, and will be, the consequences of the lack of symmetry between the two sets of boundaries?
3. Which African empires were most influential and why?
4. In what ways were European government systems in Africa beneficial and/or harmful for the Africa South of the Sahara?
5. In what ways does Africa’s climate regime impose limitations on human activity?
6. What are the major environmental problems facing Africa South of the Sahara?
7. What are the major issues related to population in Africa South of the Sahara?
8. What are the major organizations promoting interregional cooperation in Africa? What are the goals of the organizations? What countries belong to each organization?
9. In the Point–Counterpoint section, the future of Africa South of the Sahara is debated. Pick a point of view and expand on the points raised.
10. How has political instability shaped social and economic conditions in Central Africa?
11. Describe the role of agriculture in the various sub-regions of Africa South of the Sahara.
12. Why does the Republic of South Africa stand out among the region’s countries?

**Key Terms and Concepts**
- Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA)
- creole language
- Hutu
- inselberg
- plateau
- rift valley
- Sahel
- South African Development Conference (SADC)
- tribe
- Tutsi

**Check the News** – Current events that you might want to explore for your lecture, or have students explore on their own, from paper or on-line news services.
2. What current stories can you find about HIV/AIDS in Africa? Look for stories about the demographic, economic and political impacts of the disease. What countries are most severely impacted?
3. What have been the recent developments related to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda?
4. What is the AU? Who are its members? Has the organization made any headlines lately?
5. What is occurring within the Southern Africa Development Conference? Have there been any recent changes to the manner in which agreements or policy from the conference have been executed or disseminated?
6. Are there currently any conflicts centering on religion in Africa? If so, what and where are they?
7. What have been recent developments related to oil production in the region?
8. Search the news for elections occurring in Africa. Have there been any big political upsets? Is democracy making headway in any countries?
9. Check for recent stories related to foreign investment in Africa South of the Sahara. Have there been key countries were investment is coming from or going to?

**Additional Resources**
- **Test Item File**
  Test questions for this chapter are available on the Instructor’s Testing and Resource CD-ROM, available from your McGraw-Hill Sales Representative.
- **Transparencies**
  - Figure 9.3 Africa South of the Sahara: physical map
  - Figure 9.9a Africa South of the Sahara: climate
Figure 9.14 Africa South of the Sahara: age-sex pyramids
Figure 9.15 Africa South of the Sahara: population map
Figure 9.19a,b Africa South of the Sahara: HIV/AIDS (2 maps)
Figure 9.21 Africa: economic blocs
Figure 9.23 Africa South of the Sahara: consumer goods, etc
Figure 9.24 Central Africa map
Figure 9.25 Africa South of the Sahara: land uses
Figure 9.27 Western Africa: map
Figure 9.31 Eastern Africa: map
Figure 9.35 Southern Africa: map

Interactive World Issues CD
None appropriate for this unit.

The Power of Place Telecourse Series. The following segments:
Unit 8. Africa South of the Sahara
Program 19. Strength to Overcome
South Africa: This Land is My Land
Kenya: Medical Geography
Program 20. Developing Countries
Cote d'Ivoire: Cocoa and Change
Gabon: Sustainable Resources?

Digital Content Manager CD
1. All line art and photos from the textbook.
2. 19 additional photos not in the textbook.

Suggestions for Further Reading

