

# WEST AFRICA

## NIGERIA



AREA 923,768 sq km  
POPULATION 155,216,000  
MONEY Naira

## THE GAMBIA



AREA 11,295 sq km  
POPULATION 1,798,000  
MONEY Dalasi

## IVORY COAST

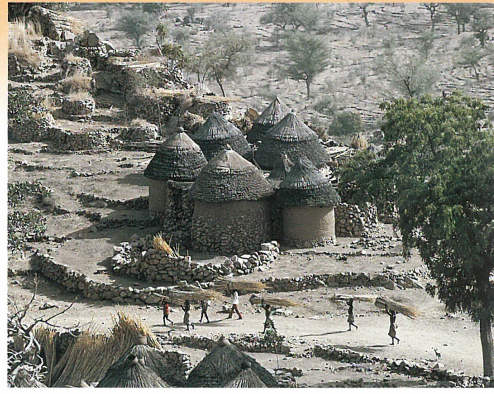


AREA 322,463 sq km  
POPULATION 21,504,000  
MONEY CFA franc

**T**HERE are lots of countries in West Africa. In the last 300 years, European countries grabbed parts of the coastline and later they took over the inland areas as well. Now, all the countries are independent, but still use the language of those who once ruled them. English, French, Spanish or Portuguese is spoken. Many Africans speak a European language as well as one or more African languages.

Nigeria is the largest and most important country in West Africa. It has over 155 million people – more than any other African country. About half the people are Muslims, the other half are mainly Christians. Although English is the official language, there are about 240 other languages in Nigeria!

In many parts of West Africa, there is rapid progress. Most children now go to primary school, and the main cities have television and airports. But many people are still very poor. Civil war has made poverty much worse in some countries – for example, in Sierra Leone and Liberia.



▲ **Village in Cameroon:** building houses with mud for the walls and tall grass for thatch. These materials are free and the homes are less hot than those with corrugated iron roofs.

## LIBERIA



AREA 111,369 sq km  
POPULATION 3,787,000  
MONEY Liberian dollar



▲ **Women pounding yams, Benin.** They use a large wooden bowl and long pestles (pounding sticks) to break up and mash the yams. These root crops are eaten at most meals. It is very hard work: much easier if it is shared! They are probably singing to help keep a rhythm for using the pestles. The baby will love this!

## TWO TYPES OF OIL

Nigeria pumps up lots of oil from under the Niger delta. Oil has brought money to some people, but pollution to others.



Palm oil comes from oil-palm trees. They grow well where it is hot and wet all year. The trees are planted in rows in a plantation. You can see the fruit hanging from the trees. The photograph on the next page shows the harvested fruit.



▲ **Market day, Nigeria.** Red peppers for sale in Benin City, in southern Nigeria. Red peppers are very popular in West Africa – they give a strong flavour in cooking. Markets are important in both towns and villages throughout Africa.

The southern part of West Africa, near the Equator, is forested. Tall trees are being felled for hardwood. Many crops are grown in the forest area and savanna, such as cocoa (for chocolate-making), pineapples and bananas. The crops are root crops, such as yams.

Further north, there is savanna. There are some trees and there is suitable for farming. There are big herds of cattle, and beautiful leather goods are on sale in the markets. Groundnuts (peanuts) and groundnuts (peanuts) are grown in the savanna. The main food crops are grains, such as maize and millet. In the north of West Africa there is a region called the Sahel. The Sahel is advancing southwards and the area of Chad has shrunk in size.

