

SOCIAL STUDIES

OUR COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT

Vocabulary

- **Economy** – a country's management of resources, and how its people make and spend money
- **Services** – 1. facilities needed by a developed community, for example schools, health care
2. something that can be sold but is not goods, for example banking, insurance, tourism
- **Standard of Living** – the degree of comfort in a community
- **Loan** – money lent on condition that it will be paid back at some time in the future
- **Scholarships** – money given to a student to help with his or her education
- **Specialists** – person who has a special skill

When The Bahamas became an independent nation in 1973, our government took on many new responsibilities. The government tries to ensure that all Bahamian people

- Can earn a living, and
- Enjoy freedom and safety

The **economy** of a country is the way in which it manages its resources, and how its people earn and spend money. It was important when The Bahamas became independent that everyone in our islands should be employed.

Full employment is a sign of a strong economy. When people are employed, they earn money and can afford to buy better food and clothing, improve their houses, pay for electricity, telephone and water, and perhaps even buy cars and televisions. They also pay taxes, which mean the government has more money to provide better **services** in the community, such as:

- Schools
- Health care and protection
- Water and electricity services
- Transport and communication facilities

These are all important in the development of our country. They mean that the people can enjoy a higher **standard of living**.

In our country, great demands are made on electrical and water supplies, both by Bahamians and by visitors. New Providence has a limited source of water, and was in urgent need of a better supply. Andros, the largest island in The Bahamas, has a much smaller population and more water than New Providence. A plan was drawn up to transfer water from Andros to New Providence.

Loans for Development

Such a large plan required a lot of money. The Bahamian government applied to the Caribbean Development Bank for help. The water project was accepted, and The Bahamas was granted a **loan**. This was important to The Bahamas because conditions laid down by the Caribbean Development bank meant that the government had a longer time to repay the loan, at a lower rate of interest, than if the money had come from a foreign bank.

Loans are also needed in The Bahamas to pay for special skills. The industrial Training Centre (BTVI) provides such training for young people who want to become welders, mechanics, carpenters or dressmakers, or to acquire such skills. Training centers like these have been set up in The Bahamas using loans from the *World Bank*. This is a special bank based in Washington DC, which lends money for development. A country is given 20 years by the World Bank to repay a loan.

Increasing Our Food Supplies

Even though the population of The Bahamas is growing steadily, we must be able to feed everyone. Bahamian farmers and fishermen cannot produce enough to feed us and our visitors, so most of our food has to be imported from other countries. To increase our local food supplies we need money to develop farmland, crops and livestock and to train people to have special skills and knowledge.

The government successfully applied to the *Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO), which is an agency of the United Nations, for help with training and the development of facilities. New facilities were added to the agricultural station at Gladstone Road in New Providence, which is now called the Gladstone Road Agricultural Complex. Bahamians train here to teach local farmers how to produce more from their land. Experiments are being carried out to find ways of increasing the production and improving the preservation and distribution of food.

Developing Our Skills

Other countries help us by lending money. They also help us to develop our skills in other ways:

- Once the bank has lent money for a project, it may send people with special skills –**specialists**– to help supervise the project. While they are here these specialists pass on their skills to Bahamians.
- Bahamians may be offered special awards, or **scholarships**, to learn new skills in another country.
- The World Bank awards loans that allow Bahamian teachers to be trained in special skills.
- Doctors and nurses come from other countries to work in our hospitals, and to train Bahamians to take over their jobs when they return to their own country.
- A special apprenticeship scheme has been set up by the government for grade twelve students. They are attached to various government programs so that they can learn a trade.