

World Bank Group Sets Historic Record in Africa

MONROVIA, Liberia, July 10, 2014 (World Bank Report) --- The World Bank Group committed a record-breaking \$15.3 billion to Sub Saharan Africa's development in fiscal year 2014 (July 2013 to June 2014), supporting shared prosperity in the region and focusing on increased efforts to reduce poverty, according to a press release issued in Monrovia.

"Africa is making significant progress and at the World Bank we are stepping up the momentum to innovate and think big in order to help our clients achieve their development goals," said Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for Africa.

The Bank Group continued its strong commitment to Africa delivering \$10.6 billion in new lending for 160 projects this fiscal year (FY14). These commitments included a new record of \$10.2 billion in zero-interest credits and grants from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's fund for the poorest countries. This is the highest level of IDA delivery by any region in the World Bank's history.

In FY 2014, MIGA issued guarantees of \$515 million in support of projects in the oil and gas, power, services, and telecommunications sectors. The Agency also teamed up with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation to establish a \$350-million political risk facility that will support planned investments in sustainable agribusiness in up to 13 countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

The release says Bank Group worked collaboratively to tackle development challenges and focused on regional projects in sustainable energy, irrigation, water management, and food security, and also on job training programs for youth, preventing malaria and other tropical diseases, and on social protection for poor families across the region.

In FY14, the Bank Group focused its efforts to act quickly and effectively in emergency situations across Africa. In response to the crisis in Central African Republic, the Bank delivered emergency development funds of over US\$70 million to help restore key government services and to support food distribution and health services. Major regional initiatives focused on the challenges of fragility and conflict.

In November 2013, World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim pledged \$1.5 billion to boost economic growth and lift the people of Africa's Sahel region out of devastating poverty. Kim's pledge came during an historic joint trip to the Sahel with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Sub-Saharan Africa is blessed with large hydropower resources that can create electricity, yet only 10% of its potential has been harnessed. Boosting access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy is a primary objective of the Bank's work in Africa. During the fiscal year (FY14) projects focused on developing hydropower potential and providing new forms of sustainable power to increase energy production and benefit millions of Africans.

In a major push, IBRD, IFC, and MIGA combined forces under a joint Energy Business Plan for Nigeria. The plan will support Nigeria's energy reform program and help increase installed generation capacity by about 1,000 MW while mobilizing nearly \$1.7 billion of private sector financing for Africa's largest economy. Many projects benefit from IBRD, IFC, and MIGA working together across the World Bank Group to better leverage their development impact in the region.

In FY14, the Bank also supported the 80-megawatt Regional Rusumo Falls Hydroelectric Project in Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania, and provided a \$100-million grant to Burundi for the Jiji-Mulembwe hydropower project. Both initiatives will increase electricity generation capacity benefitting millions of Africans.

The Bank supports country-led efforts to improve agricultural productivity by linking farmers to markets and reducing risk and vulnerability; increase rural employment; and make agriculture more environmentally sustainable. Projects during FY14 included support for improving pastoralism through community development and livelihoods in Ethiopia, boosting agribusiness in Senegal, and pushing the envelope on landscape management, notably in the Sahel.

Higher education plays a key role in promoting economic growth and development especially for Africa's fastest growing youth population. As one of the largest financiers of higher education in the region, the World Bank is mobilizing its knowledge and leadership behind countries to champion education.

The World Bank's new \$150-million Africa Higher-Education Centers of Excellence project is funding 19 university-based centers for advanced education in West and Central Africa. It will support regional specialization among participating universities in mathematics, science, engineering and ICT to address regional challenges, the release concludes. **(Source: World Bank Report)**