



Introduction

This book is designed primarily to help *secondary school students of world geography, social studies, economics, and environmental studies* broaden their knowledge of global issues, *gain insight into Russia's situation in a global context*, and understand the problems of sustainable development—both national and global. Because development is a comprehensive process involving economic as well as social and environmental changes, this book takes an interdisciplinary approach. It attempts to describe and explain the complex relationships among various aspects of development, including population growth, economic growth, improvements in education and health, urbanization, and globalization. Teachers and students as well as learners of all ages are invited to explore these relationships even further using the statistical data and theoretical concepts presented in this book.

Difficult Questions, Different Answers

The book starts with three difficult questions: What is development? How can we compare the levels of development achieved by different countries? And what does it take to make develop-

ment sustainable? The authors do not claim to have all the answers to these and other questions posed directly or indirectly in the book. Instead, students together with their teachers are encouraged to suggest their own answers by analyzing and synthesizing the information presented here. They should engage in open discussions of problems that have no simple solutions, in order to formulate their own opinions and support them with objective data and rational arguments.

Many of the answers inevitably involve value judgments, which makes absolute objectivity impossible. Even the authors have differing views on some of the issues addressed here, but they have based this book on one fundamental idea: development should be a tool for improving the lives of all people. It is up to readers to define for themselves the meaning of a better life and to prioritize the goals of development.

Data and Development

Perhaps, the main strength of this book is that it is based on abundant statistical data for most countries, presented in data tables at the end of the book as well

as in figures, maps, and references in the text. Statistics can be powerful tools for learning. They can help paint a more accurate picture of reality, identify issues and problems, and suggest possible explanations and solutions. But statistics have their limitations too. They are more reliable for some countries than for others. And because it takes a long time to collect and verify some statistics, they may be out of date before they are even published. The statistics presented here were the most recent available when this book was written.

It is also important to remember that many aspects of development cannot be accurately measured by statistics. Examples include people's attitudes, feelings, values, ideas, freedoms, and cultural achievements. Thus statistical data can tell us only part of the story of development—but it is an important part.

Comparing statistical data *on Russia* with those on other countries can be extremely revealing for several reasons. First, seeing one's country in a global context and learning how it is different from or similar to other countries can improve understanding of the country's status and of its development prospects and priorities. The authors hope that this book will help satisfy the demand of *Russian* students for information about other countries *while providing insights into Russia's recent past, present, and future*. Second, because the

economies of the world are becoming increasingly interdependent, *and Russia is actively integrating with the world market*, development processes *in Russia* and in all countries are becoming more interrelated.

A word of caution is warranted here. The authors hope that a better understanding of the complex interrelations among the economic, social, and environmental aspects of development will help readers avoid oversimplified conclusions based on just one or two statistical indicators. Readers would be wise to explore each issue in more detail by finding additional data, questioning their accuracy, and taking into account social processes that might be hard to measure and quantify.

About This Book

“The World and Russia” resulted from a unique collaboration among leading Russian education and research institutions and the World Bank Institute (WBI). The Russian authors of the book represent the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Moscow State University (MSU), the Higher School of Economics (HSE), and the Moscow Institute of Teachers’ Development (MIPKRO). The book is based largely on current statistical data, analytical studies, and English-language classroom materials published by the World Bank and provided to the authors by WBI.

However, the interpretations expressed in this book are entirely those of the authors.

An important example of a conceptual approach that the authors have adopted from the World Bank is the classification of countries by their GNP per capita into low-, lower-middle-, upper-middle-, and high-income groups (see the Glossary, Chapter 2, and the map on the inside front cover). This classification is based on quantitative indicators rather than quali-

tative concepts—which are more open to interpretation—and appears to be preferable to many other classifications. The book also uses the World Bank's grouping of countries into six analytic geographic regions (see the table in Annex 1).

Although these regional divisions differ from those traditionally used in Russian schools, this classification allowed the authors to make regional comparisons with the help of regional averages calculated by World Bank experts.