6. The core theme

The core theme—patterns and change—provides an overview of many contemporary global issues. It can be applied on a range of scales, from national to regional to global.

Inequities are examined through the study of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and progress towards achieving these goals is investigated. The approach to teaching these global issues should be optimistic and positive. It is recommended that as much of the content as possible is taught through appropriate examples and case studies, preferably chosen from a limited number of countries (between three and five) of contrasting levels of development, for example, rich and poor countries, emerging economies.

Section A

Populations in transition

You should be able to:

- explain population trends and patterns in births (crude birth rate), natural increase in mortality (crude death rate, infant and child mortality rates), fertility and life expectancy in contrasting regions of the world

- analyse population pyramids

- explain population momentum and its impact on population projections.

You should know how each of these indicators is determined, be able to describe and give reasons for the trends (changes over time) that have occurred in world regions that contrast in terms of development. For example, you should know statistics for all indicators for contrasting regions and should be able to give at least one example of a country within each region. You should be able to recognize population patterns and explain them. A common error is to assume that high rates of natural increase are explained by high birth rates alone. Remember that it is the relationship between birth rate and death rate that determines natural increase, while the relationship between birth rate, death rate, immigration and emigration determines population change.

You should be able to draw two contrasting pyramids and show their development over time.

Features such as the influx of immigrants, the impact of birth-control policies and gender imbalances could all be explained through annotations on a population pyramid. (Refer to chapter 5, "Data response skills", for advice on drawing an annotated diagram.)

You should be able to:

- explain dependency and ageing ratios

- examine the impacts of youthful and ageing populations

- evaluate examples of a pro-natalist policy and an anti-natalist policy.

Dependency ratios are found by calculating the proportion of young and/or elderly people relative to the working population (see the "Key definitions" on page 26).

You should be able to explain both positive and negative socio-economic impacts for both ageing populations and youthful populations.

$$\text{Dependency ratio} = \frac{\text{population aged 0–19 years and population aged 65 years and over}}{\text{Population aged 20–64 years}} \times 100\%$$

You should be able to:

- discuss the causes of migrations, both forced and voluntary

- evaluate internal (national) and international migrations in terms of their geographic (socio-economic, political and environmental) impacts at their origins and destinations.

Bear in mind that you need to have selected case studies that fulfill these requirements and that give the topic its broadest interpretation. This means looking at migrations with different motives, on different scales and with a range of impacts, which may be positive or negative and long or short term. Your case studies should not be confined to the rich world because both internal and international movements have profound socio-economic effects in the poor world.

You should be able to:

- examine gender inequalities in culture, status, education, birth ratios, health, employment, empowerment, life expectancy, family size, migration, legal rights and land tenure.

The implication here is that the status of women is inferior, although it is not specified. You should explain the origins of inequality, its consequences, and any attempt to achieve a balance of opportunities. In order to cover all aspects of gender inequality listed here, you should select two countries with marked cultural contrasts. For example, one selected from the Middle East, where gender inequality is still an issue, and one selected from northern Europe. You should know some appropriate statistics, such as the gender gap index.