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# Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential

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Edited by the Union of International Associations  
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4th ed. 1994/1995. – 3 volumes – ISBN 3-598-11165-7.

This unique 3-volume reference book is a comprehensive sourcebook of information on recognized world problems, their interconnections and the human resources available to analyze and ultimately respond to them. Many are seldom, if ever, described elsewhere in specific or precise terms. Much of the information derives from the United Nations and other intergovernmental agencies, as well as from the many international nongovernmental bodies documented in the companion 3-volume *Yearbook of International Organizations*.

The Encyclopedia is innovative in that considerable effort has been devoted to identifying and juxtaposing the many conflicting perceptions and priorities which constitute the dynamic reality of world society. Such information is usually difficult to extract from research literature stressing theories, administrative documents justifying programs, political manifestos defending ideological positions, or from news commentaries on current events.

No other publication identifies such a complete range of problems transcending national boundaries. The world problems in Volume 1 are complemented by a group of sections in Volume 2 indicating ways in which appropriate responses may be conceived. What emerges are patterns, relationships and configurations uncharacteristic of the usual fragmented and specialized perceptions, or of the policies and institutions that have themselves become barriers to understanding and meaningful change. This edition of the Encyclopedia includes, for the first time, a third volume on international organization action strategies.

With a total of nearly 20,000 entries, linked by over 158,000 cross-references, this edition is more comprehensive than ever before. Entries themselves have been rigorously updated and extended in both quantity and content. For example, over 90% of the problem descriptions were revised or updated between the 3rd edition in 1991 and this 4th edition. Editorial work for the 1994 edition focused on major updates to world problems and their relationships, to approaches to human development, and to human values and their relationship to world problems.

The phenomena identified in this publication are those which inspire both hopes and fears, whether real or imaginary, about the world's future. They constitute a challenge to creative remedial action, functioning as a powerful stimulus to the development of society. The Encyclopedia deliberately presents fundamental contradictions -- of cultures, ideologies, beliefs and even "facts" -- in an effort to explore the complex, dynamic middle ground of possible solutions to the problems of the global village.

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**Volume 1:** The number of world problems described is 9,832, with a further 2,380 referenced by index only. There are 119,000 cross-references between entries.

**Volume 2:** The number of human development entries is 4,475, with 17,900 cross-references between them. The human values section now also serves as a unique index to world problems from a value perspective. Volume 2 is divided into 6 sections:

- Human development concepts and modes of awareness (4,456 entries linked by 15,237 relationships)
- Integrative concepts
- Metaphors and patterns
- Transformative approaches
- Human values and wisdom (3,254 entries linked by 23,237 relationships)

**Volume 3:** This new volume contains descriptions of over 15,000 international strategies and action plans. It cross-references the world problems in Volume 1 and the international organizations described in the companion *Yearbook of International Organizations*. The information on strategies and action plans, developed from a section last included in the 1986 edition, provides the necessary remedial focus to balance the information in Volume 1. It too relies on information provided by international organizations.

**Cross-references:** There are cross-references between entries in the principal sections. If present, these are listed at the end of each entry. In some cases there are also cross-references between entries in different sections. Generally there are two main groups of cross-references:

- Logical relationship between entries in a section:
  - Broader, or more general, entries
  - Narrower, or more specific, entries
  - Related entries
- Functional relationship between entries in a section:
  - Causally preceding entries: Other entries that may be considered to precede the entry in any causal chain or process;
  - Causally following entries: Other entries that may be considered to follow from this entry in any causal chain.

For world problems, a further distinction may be made in each case between a **constructive** and a **destructive** causal chain.

**Vicious problem cycles and sustainable strategic loops:** The functional relationships between problems have been searched to locate vicious loops, shifting the level of analysis from isolated problems to problem cycles. These are listed in Volume 3. Information in Volume 3 also permits detection of serendipitous relationships between strategies.