

What Influences Development?

Youthink! caught up with Tatyana Soubbotina who wrote [Beyond Economic Growth](#), a book on development for students.

Why Should You Read This Book?

It's important to include youth in discussions about local, national and global development because the world is connected and will become even more so in the future.

"Young people need basic, objective statistics about what's going on in the world," Tatyana says. "How many poor countries are there in the world? What's the proportion between poor countries and rich countries, poor people and rich people? What's the level of inequality among countries and within countries? What are the major environmental issues that humanity strives to solve by common efforts because there is no way to solve them at the national level?"

Freedom or Safety?

What do you value more: freedom or safety? Ideally, you want both. But in economic (and broader development) terms you can't have both.



[Tatyana Soubbotina talks about development.](#)

People often have to choose between economic freedom (which means lower taxes) and economic safety (which means higher taxes), Tatyana explains.

"For example, the United States and the European Union make different choices on this issue," she says.

"Different countries, different social groups, different people may have their own values and priorities for development."

Not a Development Guide


The premise of the book was simple—define development.

The reason for the book was simple—explain to Russian students what development is. When Communism dissolved in the early 1990s, Russians needed a context to make sense of their changing world.

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“People knew that the market economy should bring more material products, high efficiency and high productivity. But how it is going to bring happiness? People needed something to connect the market economy to the broader ideals they had in their mind,” she says.

The task at hand proved quite difficult. Explaining development is complex, Tatyana admits. There is no how-to-manual for development that countries or people can buy, read and do.

“It is change but only the kind of change that people perceive as positive,” she adds.

“Defining development often depends on who’s talking about it,” Tatyana says. “Development is economic development, plus social, plus cultural, plus institutional, plus environmental development.”

But there are ways to track development of a country and its people by looking at the country’s economic growth and social and human aspects.

Putting Statistics in a Perspective

Tatyana looked at several indicators that track human progress. She then explained relationships between them and what they say about development.

These indicators include income per capita because people need money to choose their way of life. Life expectancy reflects people’s health and is crucial for people to be able to take care of themselves. Education indicators are important because people need education and access to information to understand what is going around them and make informed decisions.

But people in different countries or in different social groups within one country often have different interests and priorities. “The challenge is to try to find solutions that produce the most balanced outcomes for people to benefit together, and keep in mind the needs of those generations that will come after them,” she says.

The book doesn’t give solutions, just an overview of what’s going on in the world.

Besides “solutions will depend too much on the values of those who read the book,” she says.

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