In this, the last post for 2014, we take a look back on the year that was. An editors’ pick, this is a summary of some of the best analysis presented through the Devpolicy blog over the year, using the three themes that summarize our research interests.

**Australian aid**

It has been another eventful, if ultimately depressing, year for Australian aid.

We began with analysis of the allocation of the first round of aid cuts in January by Stephen Howes and Robin Davies, and continued with coverage of the May aid budget statement by Matthew Dornan, Stephen Howes, Mel Dunn, Joann Lindner Pradela and Anthony Swan. Stephen Howes and Jonathan Pryke did the numbers on the December announcement of a 20% cut to the 2015-16 aid budget, with other contributors providing their commentary here.

We analysed the Coalition’s emerging policies on aid, starting with Foreign Minister Bishop’s opening remarks at our now annual aid conference. Stephen Howes and Joel Negin provided some initial thoughts on the Coalition’s new aid policy and Robin Davies took a deeper look in a six-part series. Julia Newton-Howes reflected on the impact of Australia’s economic diplomacy agenda. We also took aim at the failing transparency agenda under both Labor and the Coalition and continued our analysis of the impact of the government’s regional resettlement policies on the aid program.

We reviewed aid evaluations on law and justice, HIV education and prevention in PNG, Australia’s volunteer program and women’s economic empowerment. Joel Negin reported his initial findings on research into the effectiveness of scholarships in a three-part series.

On aid and the community, we continued our analysis of donations to NGOs over time by mapping private giving to ABS data and tracking the uptick in the reliance of Australian development NGOs on government funding. We also reported on new research showing some trends in public perceptions and support for
PNG and the Pacific

PNG had another year of rapid and tumultuous change.

Early in the year a group of prominent Papua New Guinean academics reported on the implications of the government’s purchase of a large volume of Oil Search shares. Our analysis of PNG’s economic policies also ramped up with blogs this year by Paul Flanagan and colleagues looking at PNG’s exchange rate, Sovereign Wealth Fund, monetary policy, trade performance, and worrying commodity price outlook. We covered the PNG budget in detail here. Matthew Dornan and Anthony Swan looked at how to address the challenges of infrastructure management. Bai Kama kept us up-to-date on PNG politics and court cases, as did Grant Walton on corruption, and Colin Wiltshire on service delivery reforms.

Serena Sumanop shared her thoughts on the voice of youth in PNG while Stephanie Copus-Campbell shared her reflections on talking with two prominent PNG female professionals and Ashlee Betteridge spoke with Dame Carol Kidu about why things are getting tougher for PNG’s women. Stephen Howes and Greg Taylor Scholar Thomas Wangi presented their research into the pay of PNG academics. Stephen Howes reported on progress being made by the Lae Case Management Centre which is helping survivors of family and sexual violence, and which Devpolicy is supporting. We also provided various blogs on the findings of our Promoting Effective Public Expenditure Project. Carmen Voigt-Graf wrote one of our most popular posts of the year on her move to Port Moresby.

Beyond PNG, we provided detailed coverage of the Solomon Islands elections, and concluded our series assessing RAMSI ten years on. Wadan Narsey reported on media censorship in Fiji. New research showed what Fijian men and women thought about politics. Tess Newton-Cain's Pacific Conversations series continues to flourish, and this year included a conversation with the Prime Minister of Vanuatu.

On the region more broadly, the potential of economic growth in the Pacific was debated by the ADB’s Steve Pollard, ANU Emeritus Professor Ron Duncan and the IMF’s Yongzheng Yang. Matthew Dornan and Philippa Brant continued their research into Chinese development assistance in the region. Jonathan Pryke critiqued a new index ranking efforts to aid the Pacific.

Labour mobility was again a hot topic on the blog, with pieces discussing the lack of women in temporary migration schemes, the Kiribati Australia Nursing Initiative, the makeup of Pacific Islanders currently in Australia, the disappointing performance of the APTC in promoting regional labour mobility, and the role of PACER Plus.

Global development policy

Roger Riddell provided an update to his seminal 2008 book addressing the question of whether aid really works. Benjamin Day assessed the 2013 expansion of the OECD DAC and its implications for the future of aid. Robin Davies looked at why global aid rose in 2013 and what seems to be happening in 2014. We launched a series looking into the New Zealand aid program. We also analysed the emerging aid programs of Brazil and India as well as the formation of the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Joel Negin deconstructed aid for trade in a two part series.

Engagement with the private sector is now in vogue, and the blog took notice. Topics included how to demonstrate additionality when engaging with the private sector, the role of PDPs in tackling neglected diseases, our submission to a parliamentary inquiry into the role of the private sector in development, and the future of Enterprise Challenge Funds for development.

On broader development issues, we reflected on MDG progress, and the role of climate change and inequality in the post-2015 agenda. We analysed the government’s policy shift on the UN Green Climate Fund. Erin Goddard reported on the findings of World Vision’s recent gender equality study, while Ashlee...
Betteridge interviewed World Bank economist Jeni Klugman about the Bank’s recent gender empowerment report. We also covered the Ebola crisis in two posts from Joel Negin and Sam Byfield. Matthew Dornan addressed whether ‘green growth’ is here to stay or just the latest development fad. The 2014 G20 in Brisbane also garnered attention on the blog, with posts collected here.

And the winner is…

As we did last year, we’re going to single out an individual piece, as our must-read blog of the year. If you haven’t already, check out Sam Koim’s insightful and inspirational reflections on his tenure, now rapidly expiring, as the head of Taskforce Sweep, fighting corruption in PNG.

Thanks to all the contributors who wrote our 263 blogs and 132 ‘in briefs’ in 2014, and to all of you who read them. Have a good break, and see you in 2015.

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