

April 2024 aid news

by Development Policy Centre

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Our monthly update of news and analysis on aid and international development, with a focus on Australian aid.

Australian aid

The Albanese government **has appointed** Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin (Rtd) as its Special Adviser on Israel's response to Israel Defence Forces strikes which killed Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom and six of her World Central Kitchen (WCK) colleagues. WCK has **repeated its call** for an independent investigation into the killings. According to **yet-to-be-verified statistics** collected by the Aid Worker Security Database, between October and December 2023 almost three times as many aid workers were killed in Gaza than has been recorded in any single conflict in a year.

ACFID has joined global health and faith groups **in calling for targeted sanctions** against Israeli officials who have publicly endorsed the denial of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza.

The OECD's latest **preliminary statistics** on Official Development Assistance show that in 2023 Australia ranked 26 out of 31 country members of its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in terms of its aid generosity. Adjusting for other DAC members' counting of **in-donor refugee costs**, Australia ranked 24th.

Australia will attend the **annual meetings** of the Asian Development Bank in Georgia in early May which will include negotiations for the next replenishment of the Bank's concessional financing arm, the Asian Development Fund. The Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Pat Conroy, has said that **he wants to use** Australia's "leverage" in the Bank to push for reform of its procurement systems and strengthen the focus on bid quality relative to price.

DFAT has released its inaugural **Performance of Development Cooperation report** (2022-23) and its first multi-year **Development Evaluation Plan** (2023-24 to 2025-26) as part of the implementation of the government's 2023 International Development Policy.

As DFAT works to develop its own Transparency Portal by the end of the year, New Zealand **has recently launched** its new “DevData” platform.

Global/regional aid

Large parts of Micronesia, including the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), **have been designated** as under extreme and exceptional drought, conditions which are expected to persist until at least July.

At their meeting in mid-April, US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida flagged more collaboration with “like-minded partners” to **finance new subsea cables** in the Pacific region, committing US\$16 million towards cable systems for FSM and Tuvalu.

During a visit to PNG, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi **reportedly signed** new agreements to advance PNG’s participation in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China **has also promised more BRI cooperation** with FSM.

In his meeting with President Xi Jinping, Indonesia’s President-elect, Prabowo Subianto, cited the China-financed Jakarta-Bandung high speed rail project as a “gold-standard” **example of bilateral cooperation**. The two countries have agreed to a joint feasibility study on an extension of the project to Surabaya, Indonesia’s second-largest city.

To respond to the “intertwined challenges” of climate change, food insecurity, debt, and fragility, World Bank President Ajay Banga **has called upon donors** to the organisation’s concessional financing arm, the International Development Association, to provide US\$30 billion in its upcoming replenishment round.

Four years after the adoption of the G20’s Common Framework for speeding up and simplifying debt restructuring, the World Bank’s chief economist, Indermit Gill, has said the Framework has not provided a single additional dollar in debt relief and **needs reform**.

UNICEF estimates that three million children in Haiti are now **in need of humanitarian assistance** as essential services collapse in many areas due to state collapse and worsening gang violence.

The UK **has been accused** of double counting £500 million in existing aid as “climate aid”, including by automatically counting 35% of its contributions to the World Bank and 35% of its humanitarian spending in countries like Yemen, Afghanistan, and Somalia because they are defined as climate vulnerable countries.

After months of congressional delay, US President Biden has **signed into law** an

appropriations bill that includes US\$9.5 billion in additional economic support to Ukraine — notably, at the behest of House Republicans, this has now been converted into a forgivable loan — as well as \$US9 billion in additional emergency support for civilians in Gaza and other humanitarian crises.

A manifesto released by *Project 2025* — a consortium of think tanks that want to “deconstruct the administrative state” — provides some insight into the **potential directions of US foreign aid** under a possible second Trump administration. Among many other proposals, the blueprint calls for the removal of all references to “gender” in USAID and State Department policies, regulations, programs, contracts, public materials, and websites.

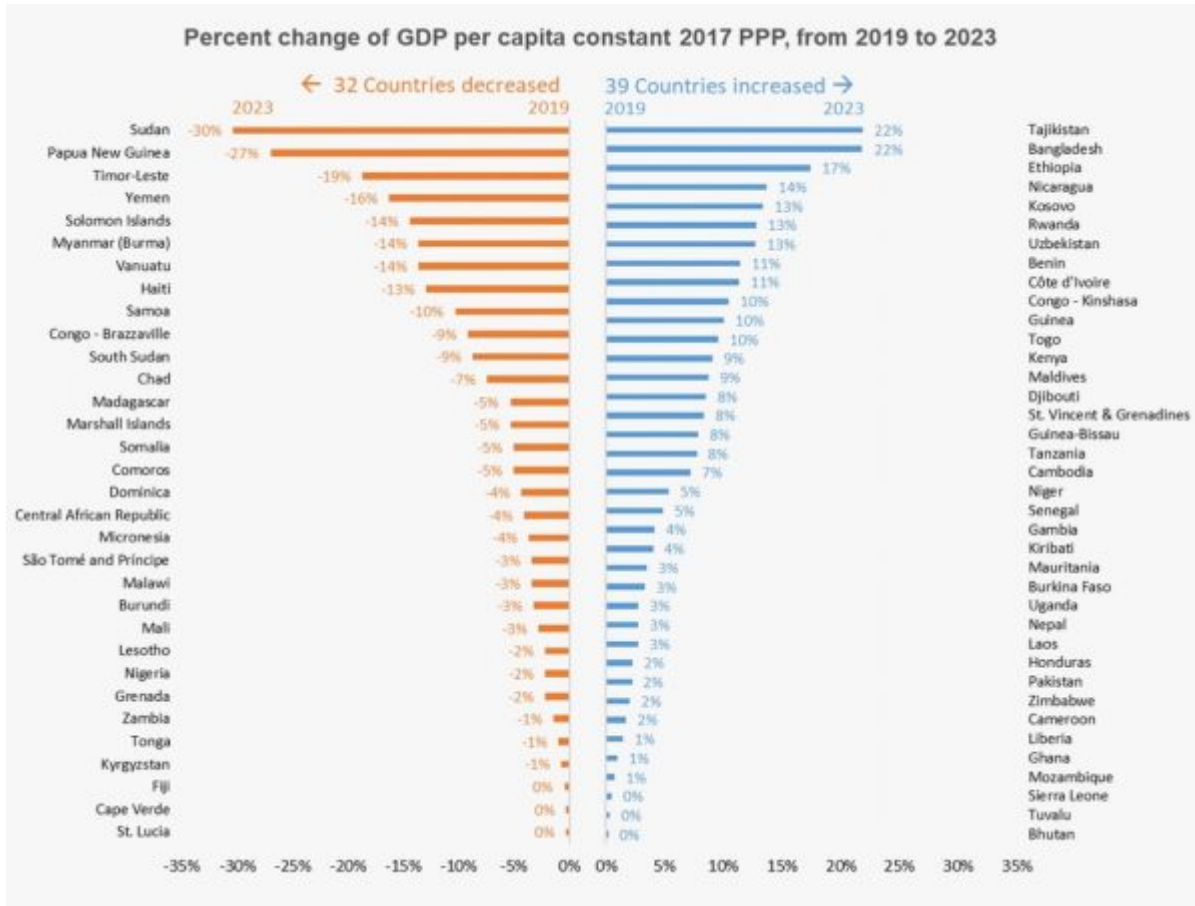
Books, articles, reports, blogs and podcasts

The Devpolicy Talks podcast **returns to the airwaves** after a two-year hiatus with Helen Clark, former New Zealand Prime Minister and UNDP Administrator, talking to Robin Davies about whether governments and global institutions are ready to change the way they respond to pandemics.

Delivering the **2024 Pamela Denoon lecture** at the ANU, Australia’s Ambassador for Gender Equality, Stephanie Copus Campbell, speaks about her first-hand experience on women’s rights and discrimination in PNG and other countries in the region, as well as threats to gender equality worldwide.

Examining the massive post-COVID shortfall in global development finance, Adam Tooze uses IMF figures (where data is available — several countries, including Afghanistan and Syria, are not included) to highlight the IDA-eligible countries in which **GDP per capita declined** the most between 2019 and 2023 (see Figure 1). As well as Sudan (-30%) and Yemen (-16%), three of Australia’s key bilateral aid recipients – PNG (-27%), Timor-Leste (-19%), and Solomon Islands (-14%) – make up the top five.

Figure 1: Nearly half of IDA-eligible countries have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels



Source: World Economic Outlook, October 2023 cited in: A Tooze, *Chartbook 277: The world is still on fire!* (Summers & Singh) – *the disaster of development finance in 2023*, 20 April 2024. Notes: Guyana’s GDP per capita increased 282% and was excluded as an outlier for visual purposes. Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sri Lanka are excluded due to missing data.

A new data snapshot from the Lowy Institute examines the **US\$50 billion disparity** between China’s infrastructure promises in Southeast Asia and what it has delivered.

The limited-series **F! It! podcast** from the International Women’s Development Agency is bringing feminist and First Nations perspectives to foreign policy. The latest episode features two development practitioners, Jenna Hawes from Ninti One and Alice Tamang from the Australian Volunteers Program.

A **new book** from the Blavatnik School’s Thomas Hale examines political strategies for tackling climate change and other “long problems” that span generations.

Disclosures:

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