

Best of the blog 2013

by Jonathan Pryke and Stephen Howes

20 December 2013



In this, the last blog for 2013, 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 describe our research mandate, and a bonus fourth.

Global development policy

Michelle la O' and Robin Davies **showcased** their research into advance estimates for ODA flows for 2013 estimating a modest increase in total ODA (driven by the UK's surging aid budget, also discussed on our blog **here**), temporarily interrupting the post-GFC aid descent. Joel Negin **asked** whether the focus of aid should shift from finance to knowledge sharing. Dinuk Jayasuriya **asked** what value for money is in aid programs, and how it can be measured.

Engagement with the private sector featured strongly. Kate Nethercott and Marianne Jago-Bassingthwaight provided some good news in this **post** about women's economic empowerment through private sector partnerships. Robin Davies and Margaret Callan **discussed** their recent discussion paper on public-private partnerships for development. Michael Wulfsohn and Stephen Howes also **highlighted** a new Devpolicy Brief on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, showing how much further Australia needs to go if it is to become a leader in mining transparency.

Finally, returning staff member (and star blogger) Ashlee Betteridge wrote two pieces under this heading that drew significant attention. The **first** was on the controversial topic of orphanage tourism; the **second** on the need to better incorporate menstrual hygiene management in development practice.

Pacific and PNG

PNG had an unusually high profile in the Australian media this year, and was an important source of blog topics for us.

Graham Teskey [suggested](#) some unorthodox changes to governance programs, sparking lively debate in the comments. Colin Wiltshire [covered](#) our PNG budget forum in March. Andrew Mako and Grant Walton also shared their experiences ([here](#) and [here](#)) carrying out field research for our [PEPE project](#), the preliminary results of which are summarised in [this post](#). Anthony Swan and Matthew Dornan [provided their advice](#) on how to improve infrastructure development. We [released](#) some new analysis on gender-based violence in PNG, reinforced by Ume Wainetti's powerful call to action in [this post](#), and [an initiative we are supporting](#). Margaret Callan discussed the development contribution mining makes (or doesn't make) in PNG. We documented the nationalisation of Ok Tedi and the attempted takeover of SDP ([here](#) and [here](#)). And we [covered the implications](#) of the 'PNG solution', both in terms of PNG's [national identity](#) and [aid to PNG](#).

Beyond PNG, we continued our analysis of the Fijian budget (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Stephen Howes [criticised](#) Australia and NZ for blocking multilateral bank lending to Fiji. And we ran a series on the RAMSI intervention 10 years on, collected [here](#). We also launched a new series from Tess Newton Cain, [Pacific Conversations](#), where Tess sits down with Pacific leaders and thinkers.

On the Pacific region more broadly, Jonathan Pryke highlighted the boom in aid to the Pacific over the last decade ([here](#) and [here](#)). Stephen Howes and Jesse Doyle continued their research around Australia's troubled seasonal worker program, collected [here](#). Jimmie Rodgers discussed his thoughts on rethinking the Pacific aid architecture ([here](#) and [here](#)). Jim Adams provided [unique insight](#) into the lessons in economic reform the Pacific can learn from Africa based on his 2013 Harold Mitchell Development Policy lecture. And Tony Hughes [discussed](#) the findings of the 'What Can We Learn?' 3-day symposium and subsequent report.

Australian aid

It was an exhausting and game-changing year for Australian aid.

Our commentary began with our [three piece](#) review of AusAID's first Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness. We continued to [cover](#) the asylum-seeker aid diversion and provided recommendations to various government inquiries (on [Afghanistan](#), [ACIAR](#), [Timor-Leste](#) and the [African Development Bank](#)). Jonathan Pryke tracked AusAID transparency ([here](#) and [here](#)), while Ashlee Betteridge [provided](#) a viral hit reflecting on her experience as a volunteer. We also [documented](#) new analysis on the other aid scale-up in Australia: private giving to development NGOs.

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We provided [in depth coverage](#) of the Australian aid budget. And [further analysis](#) of the Labor Government's 'August Statement', and of the Coalition's election-eve cuts to the aid budget (see Robin Davies' piece [here](#) and Benjamin Day's [here](#)).

The sweeping changes in aid management under the Coalition have dominated the blog in the past few months. Robin Davies has been the leading voice, giving [his advice](#) on how to best proceed with the re-integration of AusAID and DFAT (as well as [reflecting](#) on the lessons learned from Canada), [providing](#) a roadmap for staffing adjustments in the aid program, and delivering (in what was our most popular blog post of the year) a [eulogy](#) for AusAID. You can read all the numerous contributions on this topic [here](#).

Ashlee Betteridge and Stephen Howes [argued](#) for a parliamentary committee on aid, a call which [appears](#) to have been heeded.

Finally, we ended the year with the first two ([here](#) and [here](#)) in a series of posts on the results of the [2013 Australian aid stakeholder survey](#).

Inspiration

We hope that the blog always adds clarity and interest to your life. Occasionally, you can find inspiration here too. If you want to recharge your passion for development over the summer break, read Kamalini Lokuge's [graduation speech](#). And if you're only going to read one post from our list of choices, try our blog post of the year: Andrew Anton Mako's amazing two-part account of how he overcame the odds to get an education, and more, in PNG ([here](#) and [here](#)).

Thanks to all the contributors who wrote our 292 blogs and 148 'in briefs' in 2013, and to all of you who read them. Have a good break, and see you in 2014.

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