

Best of the blog 2014

by Jonathan Pryke and Stephen Howes

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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 development NGOs and Australian aid.

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. [Bal 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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