

Development policy buzz

by Development Policy Centre

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Here's a quick round-up of some of the stories that have created a buzz or otherwise caught our interest over the last week.

DFID news: aid review and international appointment

Having joined the Development Policy Centre from DFID, I'm looking forward to learning more about DFID's aid review. The findings of a major review of aid funding are due to be unveiled this week by Andrew Mitchell, the International Development Secretary. How will it be received?

Some news is already leaking out on the [winners and losers](#) from the review, including the news that the UK is threatening to [de-fund the FAO](#) for poor performance and DfID administration staff will be cut by a third. The big winners were India and Ethiopia.

In other news from DFID, Nemat Shafik (Minouche), DFID's Permanent Secretary, has been appointed as [Deputy Managing Director of the IMF](#). Minouche has been PS since 2008 and before joining DFID was vice-president for private sector development at the World Bank.

How to decide when and how to evaluate impact

Last week I was in Suva, with [3ie](#), identifying suitable poverty programs for rigorous impact evaluation (more [here](#)).

An impact evaluation differs from traditional evaluation in that it seeks to attribute the effects of an intervention on development outcomes, for example the number of lives are saved by an immunisation program. It helps us to find out what works, and when combined with other evaluation techniques, why.

Getting to the heart of the attribution question requires a good counterfactual, what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. This is where the evaluations start to get expensive and complicated—IEs need lots of data and often

require sophisticated statistical techniques.

The what, when and how of IE are fascinating issues and ones that all aid professionals should be thinking about. Michael Clemens has an interesting [five minute video](#) on the costs and benefits for doing an impact evaluation. And if you are interested in finding out how to do a good impact evaluation, the World Bank has a new book on [practical issues](#), which is free to download in PDF format.

How big are the food price increases?

OXFAM's blog, From Poverty to Power, has an interesting piece on [world food prices](#). Most of the discussion around the renewed food price spike is conducted in terms of world prices, dollar denominated. But people buy food in local currencies, which may or may not follow the dollar trend. UNICEF has a helpful [new \(30 page\) paper](#) out which looks at local food prices across 58 developing countries in 2010 and fills in some of the gaps in our knowledge. The OXFAM blog discusses the implications..

Welcome to the social network

Finally, and on a lighter note, I was delighted to hear that Aaron Sorkin won the Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay for The Social Network. You may be familiar with his writing from the hit series The West Wing. The Social Network—the story of the creation of Facebook—is definitely worth watching.

In a related blog, at [Virtual Economics](#), I take a quick look at the statistics on Facebook users worldwide. The fastest growth—and we're talking stellar growth—is in developing countries. The numbers are already getting big: there are 25 million members in Africa, meanwhile there are 400,000 in the Pacific. Another interesting feature is the demographics; typically two-thirds of users are aged 18-34, and there is a good balance of men and women.

Exploring the social and development impact of this kind of new media would make a fascinating PhD thesis..

We value your feedback

At the Development Policy Centre, we live and breath development policy, following and contributing to ongoing debates. We want to share more of what we're reading with you and would welcome your feedback on your interests. This blog post contains a cross-section of topics—let us know what you think. What's creating a buzz for you?

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The Development Policy Centre is part of the Crawford School of Public Policy under the College of Law, Governance and Policy at The Australian National University.

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