

Fortnightly links: aid distribution, RCTs, Brexit, superbugs, the UN, and more

By Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood

Do middle income countries get more aid per person than poorer countries, as suggested by Professor Hans Rosling? Owen Barder offers a [careful analysis of the data](#). The answer depends somewhat on how you run the numbers, but the most reasonable approaches suggest that they don't.

Drawing upon journal publication statistics, David McKenzie [argues persuasively](#) that Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) have not taken over development economics. However, it's worth scrolling down to Martin Ravallion's comment below the blog post, in which he argues that the real ground of contestation is not published journal articles but rather evaluations, where RCTs are becoming hegemonic. If this seems fantastical here in Australia, Ravallion provides some good numbers to show that it may well be the case in the World Bank at least. If it is, IMHO (Terence), then the real question is what are the RCTs crowding out: good evaluations using more appropriate methodologies, or simple, uncritical interview-based evaluations (which feel like they're still the standard fare in much of the aid world)?

Never mind the RCTs, what about big questions such as 'does aid work?' In the process of doing a pretty good job of arguing that RCTs are useful, Rachel Glennerster [provides some eye-popping maps](#) that point to major malaria success in Africa — success in which aid played an important role.

On the other hand, *The Economist* was highly [critical on foreign aid](#) this week,

describing it as ‘failing’, ‘as coordinated as a demolition derby’, and ‘a mess’.

This looks to be a [fascinating podcast](#) from the LSE: why have gender indicators improved in Bangladesh while at the same time other development indicators have not seen similar improvements? The ABC also offered an [intriguing podcast](#) this week on a different topic: the strange, at times almost unbelievable, history of Nauru.

The ODI [hosted a debate](#) on what Brexit would mean for aid — scroll past the Twitter stuff to get to the actual video discussion. And Kevin Watkins has a column [arguing](#) Brexit would be bad for aid.

2015 and 2016 have been busy years for elections in African countries, with more elections scheduled. Gallup has an [interesting look](#) at the popularity of African leaders.

We’ve got Doctors, Engineers, and Reporters without Borders — could Architects without Borders be next? Sarah Hucal looks at the [role of architecture](#) in addressing global displacement.

‘Superbugs’ — drug-resistant bacteria — are a growing global health concern, and as much as socioeconomic problem as a biological one, [argues](#) Jason Silverstein on the PLoS Blog.

Last week the people of Switzerland [rejected a basic income proposal](#) — which would have given each adult citizen US\$2,600 per month — by a landslide, with over 75% of voters voting against it.

And lastly, there was more [bad news](#) for the state of the UN: the whistleblower who exposed the sexual abuse of children by peacekeepers in the Central African Republic is resigning, even though investigations exonerated him and admitted the UN’s “gross institutional failure” in dealing with the incident.

About the author/s

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Camilla Burkot was a Research Officer at the Development Policy Centre, and Editor of the Devpolicy Blog, from 2015 to 2017. She has a background in social anthropology and holds a Master of Public Health from Columbia University, and has field experience in Eastern and Southern Africa, and PNG. She now works for the Burnet Institute.

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