

Fortnightly links: awful aid reporting, development looking backwards and forwards, and more...

By Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood
28 August 2015

Australian aid has been on the receiving end of some awful 'journalism' of late. In addition to Miranda Devine's aid [fairy tales](#), there's been *The Telegraph's* beat up of Tanya Plibersek's call to send emergency assistance to Syria (reporting which Ruby Hamad takes down powerfully [here](#)). And there has been a shocking rash of mumbo jumbo in *The Australian* about fraud at AusAID — fraud which the paper argues justified AusAID's reintegration into DFAT. Fortunately, on this last one, our erstwhile colleague Jonathan Pryke sets the record straight very well [writing for the Lowy Interpreter](#). Attentive readers will also want to note the killer point appended to the end of his blog: cases of fraud appear to have [actually gone up since AusAID's reintegration](#) [pdf]. Writing for Fairfax Media, Richard Moore similarly [calls out](#) *The Australian's* crude critique of the aid program (republished, with permission, on Devpolicy [here](#)).

Meanwhile over at the LSE blog, development guru [Robert Wade is made very happy](#) by Carles Boix's new tome — an attempt at explaining development and why it has occurred in some places and not in others.

Looking forward, [Jason Hickel at Jacobin](#) anguishes that the SDGs place too much priority on growth and (still) not enough on inequality, and so will ultimately be environmentally unsustainable. Also looking forward, Dani Rodrik has some [very interesting ideas](#) on the fate of the world's emerging economies in difficult times (short story: unless you got very lucky South Korea style, there's no substitute for the long route of raising human capital and improving institutions). And, if trade's your thing, Rodrik has some great analysis of trade agreements [too](#). (Remember that Project Syndicate requires registration, but it's free and well worth it.)

Speaking of trade, Roads and Kingdoms' Yepoka Yeebo has a remarkable [feature](#) about the central hub of Ghana's informal economy, Suame Magazine. Beginning life as an armory in the 1930s, this vast industrial site is today the workplace of some 12,000 businesses and 200,000 workers who do a bustling trade repairing, refurbishing, and recycling all manner of imported goods.

In Limn magazine, Theresa MacPhail [argues](#) that ‘global health is as viral as the microbes it is called on to battle.’ That is, despite having the word ‘global’ in its name, in practice it relies heavily on local host institutions to function effectively. Whether this insight — one of many gleaned from the 2014 Ebola epidemic — will translate into real change remains to be seen.

On the occasion of World Humanitarian Day (Aug 19), Owen Barder [examined](#) whether cash transfers might be the way forward in post-disaster and crisis situations. Not only can relying on cash be an effective means of stretching limited budgets, but turning to cash transfers also respects the reality that beneficiaries are usually the best judges of what they need.

Lastly: devotees of the Devpolicy weekend links may have unexpectedly found themselves sans-reading material last week; we’re trialling a new, fortnightly format (feedback is welcome!).

About the author/s

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Link:

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