

Weekend reading and listening: WHO's woes, IMF and Ebola, and happiness

by Terence Wood
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If the thought of a long weekend without development is more than you can bear, here are some links.

ABC's Rear Vision has an [interesting podcast](#) examining the strengths and weaknesses of the World Health Organization (WHO) — strengths and weaknesses that have been highlighted recently by allegations that the WHO performed poorly in response to Ebola (as well as in Joel Negin's [recent post for our blog](#)).

WHO isn't the only international organisation that has been blamed for contributing to the Ebola crisis. Indeed, another (more surprising, perhaps?) culprit has been identified by some: the IMF. The allegations against the IMF started with [a paper](#) in the *Lancet* (if you can't access the paper it's summarised [here](#)), which alleged that IMF conditionalities had undermined public health systems in some of the countries most impacted by Ebola. Political scientist Chris Blattman [then defended](#) the IMF in the *Washington Post*, arguing that IMF-imposed austerity was the least of the problems these countries faced in running their health systems. Blattman's wasn't the last word on the matter though: two other political scientists, Adia Benton and Kim Yi Dionne, [replied](#) in the *Post*. They cited a series of studies (relating to public health, not Ebola specifically) that they claimed showed how donors undermined local attempts at tackling health issues. Then the authors of the [original Lancet article](#) also replied. And Chris Blattman offered a [final rejoinder](#). Who came out best? For my money I think it's a points win to Blattman, but only just. Let me know if you disagree.

If you enjoyed the [article on ISIS I linked to last week](#), you will find [this](#) discussion of ISIS (which includes some critique of that article) an interesting listen.

On the other hand, if you'd like to spend your weekend thinking about something happier, Carol Graham and Milena Nikolova have an interesting [article on development and happiness](#) in *World Development* (unhappily the article is pay-walled, but there's an earlier version [here](#)). Beyond the article itself, which is quite econometrics heavy, Graham's [website](#) has lots of interesting reading aimed at more general readers. And in *Aeon* magazine, John Quiggin has an [elegant essay](#) arguing that development should focus on reducing suffering rather than maximising happiness.

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Link:

<https://devpolicy.org/weekend-listening-and-reading-whos-woes-imf-and-ebola-and-happiness-20150305/>