

Aid Buzz (January 17): Aid quality reports | Humanitarian policy | AusAID blogs

Author : Ashlee Betteridge

Date : January 17, 2012

Welcome back to the Aid Buzz for 2012. Our last Aid Buzz was published in late November, so in this round-up we will cover December and the first half of January. The Aid Buzz will continue to be published monthly throughout 2012.

Quality of Australian aid reports

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) released two reports quietly before Christmas — the only major reports the evaluative arm of the national aid agency published during the whole of 2011. With no Annual Review of Development Effectiveness (ARDE) this year, these reports have taken its place, synthesising the ODE's assessment work over the past 12 months.

'[The quality of Australian aid – an international perspective](#)' [pdf] report is largely focused on analysis from the Brookings Institution's Quality of Official Development Assistance (QuODA) index, complemented by data from three other global assessments of donor aid performance. It was accompanied by an [ODE brief](#) [pdf] on aid to fragile states. '[The quality of Australian aid — an internal perspective](#)' [pdf] is the ODE's assessment of AusAID's own performance reporting. Both results highlight some problems but are overall upbeat. The international assessment points to "strong results" and "world class performance." The internal assessment which is based on 2009-2010 data report is similarly positive, finding improvements in a range of areas. Unfortunately, but not suprisingly, given the timing of release, there has been little if any press coverage of the two reports. But watch this blog in the coming weeks for commentary and analysis.

Meanwhile in a move that seems to signal ODE's move towards becoming AusAID's internal thinktank, it recently released seven new thinkpieces on gender, policy dialogue and the Pacific.

- Derek Brien from the Pacific Institute of Public Policy writes '[How to win friends and influence policy in the Pacific](#)' [pdf]. The paper presents a Pacific perspective on how donor engagement can become more effective in the region.
- Harry Jones writes '[Donor engagement in policy dialogue: navigating the interface between knowledge and power](#)' [pdf].
- Lota Bertulfo's thinkpiece is titled '[Women and the informal economy](#)' [pdf]. It examines gender inequity in the informal sector and proposes ideas for addressing vulnerabilities.
- Lorraine Corner writes '[Women in the formal economy](#)' [pdf], examining the need to promote women's formal economic participation.
- Marilyn Waring discusses the reality for women who run for office in male dominated environments and suggests more meaningful indicators for women's empowerment and leadership in '[Women in politics and aid effectiveness: an aid to evaluation of MDG 3](#)' [pdf].
- International consultant Sherrill Whittington [argues](#) [pdf] that peace is more likely to be lasting where both men and women are included in decision making processes when rebuilding communities.
- Christine Bradley [looks at](#) [pdf] how violence against women constitutes a barrier for achieving equality in all aspects of life: from attaining an education, to entering the workforce, to participating in political life.

The ODE also funded a [discussion paper](#) [pdf] by Dr Rick Davies on 3ie (The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation). And it released a [podcast](#) of an interview with Andrew Mason, Lead Economist and Regional Gender Coordinator for the World Bank in the East Asia and Pacific Region, and Gillian Brown, AusAID's gender advisor, on the WDR 2012.

Humanitarian Action Policy

AusAID released Australia's [new Humanitarian Action Policy](#) at the United Nations in New York in December.

The policy outlines Australia's response plans for major disasters and humanitarian crises such as famines. Australia has been showing its strength recently as a responder to such crises — it was one of the first countries to assist the Pakistan flood victims, providing \$75 million in humanitarian and early recovery assistance, and was the fourth largest country donor to the Horn of Africa famine crisis in 2011.

The new policy outlines how Australia will respond to humanitarian crises, including use of the Australian Civilian Corps, and the guiding principles for such responses. The policy pledges timely, coordinated, accountable assistance, in partnership with governments and NGOs.

AusAID gets a blog

AusAID now has its very own blog, titled '[Engage](#)'. The first post, by Minister Kevin Rudd, went up on November 30. There are now six posts in total. Blogs so far have been on topics such as [HIV in PNG](#), [farming in Africa](#), [gender violence](#), and [food security in Indonesia](#). There has even been a bit of debate in the comments section.

In other social media news, the ODE is [now on Twitter](#). The Lowy Interpreter also shared [AusAID's social media policy video](#) for staff. And the AusAID YouTube channel was updated with a whole bunch of new videos in December and January. The uploads are a 15-part series titled 'Changing Lives', chronicling Australians working for development in the Asia-Pacific. The videos depict volunteers and AusAID field staff working in communities, explaining the work that they do and the impact that it has on development. You can watch the full series of Changing Lives videos [here](#).

In Brief

- Solomon Islanders are [learning new agricultural techniques](#) thanks to AusAID.
- AusAID co-sponsored a [blogging competition in Indonesia](#) to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS.
- The Kiribati government reportedly shut AusAID out of the [assessment process for scholarship recipients](#).
- Some 60 Iraqi students sponsored by AusAID have completed [studies in agriculture](#) at the University of Adelaide.
- An Australian Parliamentary delegation [attended a discussion](#) on women's leadership and empowerment in Honiara.
- AusAID has [signed a MOU](#) with Aklan province in the Philippines to improve road infrastructure.
- AusAID's awarding of contracts to private development firms such as Coffey and GRM [came under fire](#) in the media this month, though the analysis was confined to an a listing of contracts, and aggregation of their value.
- AusAID's slow response to Opposition questions during Senate hearings has also [come under attack](#). The aid agency had not released any responses to questions on notice by the December 9 deadline.

Aid Buzz is our monthly round up of the issues and news in Australian aid. Ashlee Betteridge is a Researcher for the [Development Policy Centre](#). Ashlee is leaving the Centre to work in Timor Leste. Her Devpolicy colleagues wish her well for the move, and offer our sincere thanks for all her good work on the Devpolicy blog and social media sites.