

Buzz: MDG progress | Aid Review | Development blogging

Author : Development Policy Centre

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Improving the odds of achieving the MDGs

This year's [Global Monitoring Report 2011](#) investigates country performance, revealing a diverse, but hopeful picture.

Two-thirds of developing countries are on track or close to meeting key targets for tackling extreme poverty and hunger. Based on current economic projections, the world remains on track to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by half. To better understand results on the ground, the report presents findings and lessons from development efforts. [Read more.](#)

Aid commitments fall short

In 2005, the G8 and partners agreed to double their ODA spending by 2010. However, the OECD DAC Committee released its [2010 aid figures](#), revealing that governments pulled back from ODA and commitments were broken. Oxfam estimates that the overall commitments were short by \$17.7 billion.

Independent, external review of Australian aid program

Sandy Hollway and the Aid Review panel are due to present their report to Kevin Rudd this week. This [discussion](#) on Radio Australia with representatives from Oxfam and Aid Watch, and interviews with Kevin Rudd, Sandy Hollway, and Peter Baxter provides some interesting perspectives and insights on issues such as the objectives of the aid program, technical assistance and aid transparency.

UK aid: where does it go to and how has it changed since 1960?

An interesting [blog](#) from the Guardian. In March, the UK launched [the most extensive shake-up of aid in recent history](#), and controversially cut aid funding to some of the world's least developed countries.

[See UK aid trends](#)

[See US aid trends](#)

Readout from the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings

At the meetings last week, the NGO agenda included food price stability; FTT and the innovative financing agenda; IMF gold sales revenue; and green issues. The Civil Society Policy Forum arranged by the Bank included sessions on transparency, conditionality, aid effectiveness, taxes, education, health, food price volatility, and youth and jobs. [Read a round-up of NGO actions and responses to the meetings.](#)

Turning attention to the G20

The G8 and G20 Working Group have published its 2011 Common Lobbying Positions. These documents contain policy briefs on the key issues that NGOs are advocating to the [G8](#) and [G20](#) in 2011.

Social media: Lessons from CGD

The Center for Global Development is a great [example](#) of effective blogging and social media. Staff and fellows blog and tweet, not to broadcast but to share knowledge and enable others to engage, making up the diverse field of development. Perhaps NGOs and aid agencies can emulate their social media strategy.

Journey along with David Roodman as he works on his book on microfinance, listen to excellent podcasts by Lawrence MacDonald who hosts the [Global Prosperity Wonkcast](#), and trade tweets with the likes of [Michael Clemens](#), [Owen Barder](#), and [Amanda Glassman](#).

Failure: A new approach to aid effectiveness?

Randomised Control trials have been the craze. Rick Davies [proposes](#) another route to improve effectiveness: to build a widening consensus about the need for a defined “Minimum Level of Failure” (MLF) within aid activities. The consensus would be on the desired outcomes, not on the activities needed to achieve them. A MLF could be, say 10 percent of projects by value. Participating agencies would commit to publicly declaring this proportion of their projects as failed. They would need to show: (a) how in their particular operating context they have defined these as failures, and (b) what steps they will take to avoid the replication of these failures in the future. There would be no need for a global consensus on evaluation methods, or a hegemony of methods arising through less democratic processes.

Infrastructure financing

Infrastructure deficit is a major growth constraint in developing countries.

[The ODI Background Note](#) examines various infrastructure financing modalities, which could help to bridge the infrastructure gap in order to achieve the MDGs. It covers traditional sources of finance, new actors and new trends and poses questions to advance the thinking on new sources of infrastructure finance.

Technology Innovations for development

The dearth of infrastructure in many developing countries has inspired a generation of tech thinkers to innovate its mobile technology. Anokwa, one such innovator, created the group [Change](#). His project, [Open Data Kit](#), is a free open-source set of tools that help create mobile data collection solutions with smartphones. Socio-economic and health surveys are already incorporating the Kit. [Read more about tech innovations.](#)

Virtual economy provides jobs in developing countries

A new [study](#) by the World Bank Group's infoDev program shows that there are real earning opportunities in the virtual economy, providing income to poor and unskilled workers in developing countries. According to the study, more than 100,000 people in countries such as China and India earn a living through websites disseminating micro-tasks and online games. [Read more.](#)

The new education crisis

Access is still far from complete – but the real crisis in developing countries is that children are learning little. For extensive evidence of a learning crisis, see [Lant Pritchett's](#) paper. For more on why we should focus on learning outcomes, see Charles Kenny's [arguments](#). Slow progress in the education sector is not just about the supply side and the inputs; it is about the demand side too – and readiness of governments and donors to innovate. Meanwhile the World Bank [Education Strategy 2020](#) has just come out, which welcomes emphasis on incentives and on learning as the fundamental outcome.