

Devpolicy News (July 1): Blog overhaul | Does aid have a future? | Debating RAMSI | Big Ideas on who needs aid

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Blog overhaul

Last week we relaunched our Devpolicy Blog. It's the same address (<http://devpolicy.org/>), but it looks better, has more features, and more importantly has a new "In brief" section, where we will provide prompt reporting and analysis of key aid and development national and regional initiatives. What we've found over the last two and a half years is that too much of this news doesn't even get reported which leaves us without a basis for subsequent analysis. We're not about to become a news agency, but we do want to help provide the basis for a more informed and public debate. To see what we have in mind, check out today's items on the [new minister for aid](#), and on the [quiet demise of the controversial Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership](#).

Our "In brief" section will also replace our earlier thematic buzzes. The buzzes had the same aim of providing in-brief commentary, but we think the real-time option will work better. (And note the Pacific Buzz will continue under the auspices of our partner, the Pacific Institute of Public Policy.)

Other changes include the merger of our blog digest and newsletter into a single fortnightly Devpolicy News.

[Does aid have a future?](#)

Simon Scott

Wednesday 3 July @ 12.30pm

Seminar Room 8, Level 2, JG Crawford Building 132, Lennox Crossing, ANU

The end of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been confidently predicted for decades. But annual ODA rose by two-thirds in the last decade. Now, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the knives are out again for ODA. Simon Scott heads the Statistics and Monitoring Division of the OECD's Development Cooperation Directorate, which supports the work of the Development Assistance Committee. He knows aid numbers and trends better than anyone else, and is uniquely placed to answer this question: does aid have

a future?

More details [here](#). Enquiries to macarena.rojas@anu.edu.au.

Debating RAMSI

This year is a special one for RAMSI, the Australian-led stabilisation force in Solomon Islands. It is ten years since RAMSI arrived, and today RAMSI begins what it calls a “transition,” with fewer numbers, no military backing, and development projects handed back to AusAID.

We are marking this important time with a forum on our blog to which we are inviting a range of contributions relating to RAMSI, its successes, failures and prospects.

We have so far only published two of these, but it is clear already that a wide range of views exist.

We began with a [post](#) on June 25 from Nicholas Coppel, RAMSI’s special coordinator. According to Coppel, RAMSI has been a huge success. Thanks to RAMSI, “[s]ecurity has improved, services are being delivered and the economy is growing.” The transition that is occurring is because of this “progress that has been made”. Coppel points to risks, but only relating to “continuing fiscal policy discipline and reforms”.

Terry Brown, who was Anglican Bishop of Malaita from 1996 to 2008, and who recently (and unofficially) [released](#) the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Report, gave his [views](#) on RAMSI a couple of days later. According to Brown, RAMSI was successful initially in restoring law and order (itself a significant achievement), but hasn’t done much good since then, and indeed considerable harm. An unnecessary army presence has re-militarized the Solomons; police attitudes have antagonized various communities; generously-paid advisers have demoralized their national counterparts, and made housing unaffordable for them.

According to Brown, RAMSI’s “ambiguous legacy” should be left behind. RAMSI should be not transitioned, but ended, and replaced by traditional aid programs and the promise of quick military intervention from Townsville if needed.

There is plenty more to be said about RAMSI. It is important for Australia, as one of our most important foreign policy and aid initiatives of the last decade, and it is important for the Solomon Islands. And we don’t debate aid enough. Look out for further contributions in the coming week.

Big Ideas: who needs aid?

You can now watch the televised forum on “Aid in the Asia Pacific: Who needs it? Who pays?” held as part of the Melbourne Further of International Development in the Asia Pacific conference (link to Robin’s blog) on the *Big Ideas* [website](#). An edited version will be shown on ADB TV in the coming week. Panelists include: Alison Evans (Overseas Development Institute), Stephen Howes (Devpolicy), Eun Mee Kim (Ewha Women’s University in Seoul), Kazu Sakai (ADB), Jimmie Rodgers (SPC). The ABC’s Virginia Hausegger is the moderator.

Recent events and publications

The [Pacific and PNG Update](#), our flagship conference, took place last week, with 35 speakers across two days. Podcasts will all be available [here](#) in the coming days. Presentations are also available [here](#). And videos of all of the panels will be available [here](#) in the coming weeks.

Congratulations to our Research Fellow Grant Walton for his new publications: “An argument for reframing debates about corruption: insights from PNG” which has just been published in the *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* ([here](#)) and “The limitations of neo-liberal logic in the anti-corruption industry: lessons from PNG” in *Crime, Law and Social Change* (available as an ‘Online First Article’ [here](#)).

Blog summary

You can find a summary of all June posts in the list below.

Aid

[Straight talking from China: lessons for OECD donors](#) by Belinda Thompson.

“It was a single thought (paraphrased by me below) at that conference from Dr Tongquan Sun that prompted my ruminations today: Chinese aid is more popular with recipient countries, so why should China follow western rules?”

[The stories aid could tell](#) by Terence Wood.

“[On the new aid novel, *Missionary, Mercenary, Mystic, Misfit*.] Read it, assign it to your students, sermonise about it at the pub. And think too about the book’s silent, flawed hero: aid.”

[SWEDOW cows and rotting apricots: bad food aid proposals gaining support of MPs](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

“The attitude seems to be that it is Australia’s right to flood their markets with stuff that we don’t want (known as [SWEDOW](#) in development blogging parlance), and pretend that we are doing it out of charity.”

[Don’t keep the change: an update on the asylum-seeker levy on Australia’s aid program](#) by Robin Davies.

“Overall, a hastily-devised policy might now be looking a little more respectable.”

[A good news story: AusAID pushing forward on data transparency](#) by Jonathan Pryke.

“Not only has the Green Book returned, but it has done so with some excellent changes... Most importantly, AusAID has provided the accompanying time series data (some of which goes as far back as 1974-5) in its entirety in excel format, vastly improving accessibility for external data manipulation and analysis.”

Global development policy

[NCDs, WHA 66 and the international development agenda](#) by Sam Byfield.

“Globally, [non-communicable diseases] account for 65.5% of all deaths, and 54% of disability adjusted life years (DALYs).”

[Helen Hughes](#) by Maree Tait.

“Today the Crawford School of Public Policy at ANU stands as testimony to Helen’s pioneering efforts and her innovative mind.”

[We have a problem with food](#) by Ian Wishart.

“The rich are eating too much to the detriment of their health, while poor children are missing out. This is the sort of global challenge that should be on the minds of G8 leaders.”

[Combatting the resource curse: conferences and mandatory disclosure rules](#) by Michael Wulfsohn.

“[Legislation is about to] become active in the USA and the European Union... which will require transparency of extractive company payments to host governments. These advances throw into sharp relief the fact that Australia has not made any significant progress in enacting equivalent legislation.”

[A new aid order in the Asian century](#) by Graham Brown, Robin Davies, Anthea Mulakala and Annmaree O’Keeffe.

“Overall, it was clear from our discussions that a ‘new aid order’ is not merely on the horizon, but is already fast emerging in our dynamic region, as in the world.”

The Pacific

[Few takers in new trial sectors for Australia’s Seasonal Worker Program](#) by Jesse Doyle and Stephen Howes.

“The pilot for the new trial sectors is over three years with a total cap for that period of 1,550 places. As at the start of June this year, there have been 14 workers that have arrived to work in the accommodation industry, two in cotton and none in the aquaculture or sugar cane industries.”

[RAMSI: A few reflections on its tenth anniversary](#) by Terry M. Brown.

“While this disarmament was not 100 per cent effective and may have been overly zealous... I believe it is the most significant positive legacy of RAMSI, right up to today... If RAMSI had stopped there (as seemed to be the original plan – “in” and “out” very quickly), I think I would have no complaints.”

[RAMSI: ten years on](#) by Nicholas Coppel.

“Solomon Islands is a very different nation from the one that greeted RAMSI when it arrived on 24 July 2003. Security has improved, services are being delivered and the economy is growing.”

[Pooling in the Pacific: has it worked?](#) By Matthew Dornan, Tess Newton Cain and Stephen Howes.

“Overall, our finding is that success is mixed. The pooling “experiment” should not be written off as a complete failure, as seems to often be the attitude. But nor have earlier, ambitious expectations been met.”

[Mid-year at the Melanesian Spearhead Group](#) by Tess Newton Cain.

“The MSG is now an established feature of the Pacific political landscape and we can expect its significance and role to continue to evolve and develop into the future.”

[Time for coordinated action on equity funding for Pacific SMEs](#) by Andrea Iffland.

“[W]e need to find solutions that meet the needs and objectives of successful growing businesses of all sizes in the Pacific region.”

PNG

[Regional health programs in the Pacific: re-thinking efficiencies](#) by Joel Negin.

“The era of “vertical” disease financing accompanied by complex and divergent governance and accounting mechanisms for individual programs is coming to an end amidst the recognition that country-based, more efficient, and less burdensome models are needed to support health development in the region.”

[“Good” corruption in Enga: is corruption a culturally relative phenomenon?](#) By Marcus Pelto.

“Is there “good” and “bad” corruption? Are attempts to transfer the definition of corruption between societies such as Australia and PNG bound to fail? What then do we make of anti-corruption efforts in PNG? Are they a waste of time?”

[Lae to Goroka](#) by Stephen Howes.

“Once you start to get into the hills, the condition of the road deteriorates pretty quickly. Water is nearly always the culprit. The Highlands is of course a very wet area, and puddles and even streams on the road are common. The effects are huge potholes, or the complete removal of the sealed surface of the road.”

[Improving women’s participation in PNG politics: learning from recent success](#) by Anthony Swan and Grant Walton.

“Papua New Guinean women now make up only 2.7 per cent of total MPs. This figure is less than the 3.7 per cent average across the Pacific (excluding New Zealand and Australia) – a region with the lowest rate of women’s participation in formal politics in the world.”

[Time for a new approach to improving governance in PNG? Try transparency and social mobilisation](#) by Stephen Howes.

“[W]hat Graham Teskey says is right: we should be on the lookout for new ideas to improve governance and service delivery in PNG. Transparency and social mobilization are two strategies worth trying.”

[Anti-corruption on the front line: an interview with Sam Koim](#) by Grant Walton.

“In PNG, government departments and politicians need to actively support anti-corruption reform. [Sam] called for Australia to provide more money for anti-corruption initiatives. Sam also suggested that Australia condition its aid by allocating money to PNG based on the PNG government’s willingness to tackle corruption.”

[Combatting family and sexual violence in PNG](#) by Ume Wainetti.

“Recent data shows that 50% of Papua New Guinean women have been raped in their own homes and 68% of women have been subjected to physical violence.”

[PNG Sustainable Development Program to exit Ok Tedi](#) by Stephen Howes.

“The change in SDP’s position is a major victory for PNG PM O’Neill, but raises serious questions about government-business relations and the security of property rights in PNG. It will also reduce expenditure effectiveness.”

[Are Papua New Guineans stealing Australian jobs at the end of the resource boom?](#) By Colin Filer.

“If the resource boom has enabled 2000 Papua New Guineans to breach the walls of the Australian fortress, it is not so much a lamentable brain drain from PNG, let alone a rude attack on the rights of native Australian workers, as evidence that some Papua New Guineans can compete as equals in a global labour market and still contribute to PNG’s national development.”

In brief

[KFCP: begun with a bang, ending with a whimper](#) by Stephen Howes.

[Rudd appoints Minister for International Development](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Trafficking in persons report released: PNG performs poorly](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Upcoming event: does official development assistance have a future?](#) By Ashlee Betteridge.

[African Development Bank Bill to face inquiry](#) by Robin Davies and Ashlee Betteridge.

[A clean break from doing business rankings](#) by Jonathan Pryke and Robin Davies.

[US food aid reform rejected by house of reps](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Progress in women’s representation in the Pacific](#) by Tess Newton Cain.

[New WHO report shows violence against women is a global ‘epidemic’](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Transparency gets graphic](#) by Jonathan Pryke.

[Bishop says no backflip on planning aid](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Costly niggardliness: construction sector transparency goes begging](#) by Robin Davies.

[Challenges in accessing AusAID’s research](#) by Ashlee Betteridge.

[Devpolicy blog facelift](#) by Ashlee Betteridge and Jonathan Pryke.