

Fortnightly links: tramadol, US foreign assistance, Saudi Arabian suffrage, and more

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Date : November 4, 2016

A synthetic painkiller called tramadol is the only opioid accessible by people with cancer and post-surgical pain in many developing countries. Because it is unregulated (for fear of limiting access for those who truly need it), it is also [the source of a growing opioid crisis](#) in countries such as Cameroon, writes Justin Scheck in the *Wall Street Journal*.

This [analysis](#) from the *Washington Post* provides "everything you ever wanted to know about the US foreign assistance budget", with a particular focus on security assistance and military financing to countries like Afghanistan, Israel, and Egypt.

['Ladies First'](#), an excellent short documentary produced by the *New York Times* on women candidates in Saudi Arabian municipal elections, is a fascinating watch if you have 37 minutes to spare. Women were permitted to stand for, and vote in, elections in Saudi Arabia for the first time in December 2015.

In September, the World Health Organization declared Sri Lanka to be malaria-free. This Guardian [podcast](#) (16 minutes) charts Sri Lanka's lengthy and challenging journey to malaria elimination.

A [post on NPR's Goats and Soda blog](#) highlights the importance of good evaluation of development projects by profiling the WHP-Sky Program. WHP-Sky is an Indian e-medicine project that received some \$23 million in funding and several awards for innovation -- before there was any formal evidence that the program was actually working.

Finally, as the battle to retake Mosul from ISIS continues, this *Roads and Kingdoms* [article](#) on the only train from Baghdad is a bittersweet read. Several of the passengers photographed are internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Mosul, who have relocated to Basra -- the Baghdad train's only remaining destination.