

Newsletter: Aid Conference program released | Human rights grants axed | PNG and Fiji budgets | G20 retrospective

Author : Development Policy Centre

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Bumper program for 2015 Australasian Aid Conference

This week we have released the [full program](#) for the Australasian Aid Conference. Covering a huge range of topics on aid and development, the Conference will host a total of 65 presentations split between keynote, plenary and parallel breakout sessions. Most abstracts are also now available on the [Conference website](#).

We've already had strong interest in registrations, and are expecting another sell-out year, so [make sure you don't miss out](#).

GCF a winner, but human rights grants axed

'Tis the season for aid announcements, apparently. This week, Julie Bishop has played Santa to the UN Green Climate Fund (GCF), announcing [a surprise \\$200 million contribution](#) to come from the aid budget. (Robin Davies and Jonathan Pickering [wrote](#) last month about why this is needed.)

Elsewhere, things are less festive. On Human Rights Day, Robin Davies [revealed](#) that the aid program has quietly cut its Human Rights Grants Scheme – a sixteen-year-old program that “had the potential to do a lot of good with an amount of funding that was miniscule” – without so much as an explanation, let alone a review. Last week, Australia also [cut its contribution](#) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Bigger aid cuts are also [rumoured](#) to be in the works, and it looks like DFAT still has a way to go with its [aid staffing cuts](#) too. Anthony Swan [demolishes](#) the oft-used argument that “we can't borrow money from overseas just to send it back overseas again.”

PNG and Fiji budgets assessed

Matthew Dornan [assesses](#) the 2015 Fiji budget, describing it as business-as-usual for the big-spending Bainimarama government. Our [preliminary analysis](#) of the PNG budget argued it represented the end of the expenditure boom in PNG. More detailed analysis subsequently provided by Paul Flanagan [casts doubt](#) on the budget's claim to be fiscally credible, and argues that it instead takes PNG further down a “[slippery slope](#)”.

G20 and development agenda retrospective

[Today](#), Robin Davies kicks off a series on the G20 development agenda, arguing that the Brisbane G20 did little to advance its development objectives, and that this was unfortunately par for the G20 course. Next week, Robin will go on to give his views on what the G20 should do differently in the future, and other commentators will also provide their views.

Sam Koim on tackling PNG corruption

From my experience, when you raise the anti-corruption temperature in a country like PNG it starts to make people uncomfortable. If the temperature is too hot and you get a bit too close to the sun, you get burnt. PNG needs more men and women of courage to stand up for their country, even at a personal cost. Honesty can be costly, but you have to stay the course.

That's how the head of PNG's Taskforce Sweep, Sam Koim, concluded [his blog](#), a condensed version of his recent ANU speech. During his visit, Sam also updated us on the status of Taskforce Sweep, which was effectively disbanded by the Prime Minister after making corruption allegations against him. His team is continuing on as best as it can without a budget. To find out more, listen to an interview with [ABC's The World](#).

You can also hear Sam's full talk [on our podcast](#).

If you're after food for thought on a long drive or bus ride in the holidays, you can also [listen](#) to our recent events on Afghanistan, Solomon Islands, and malaria eradication in the Asia-Pacific. Our podcast is available [through iTunes](#) and [Feedburner](#).

Holiday blog closure

We're taking a break starting December 20. The blog will be back in action from January 5. But don't tune out just yet—we have some great posts coming up next week on the G20, and a wrap-up of some of our favourite posts of the year.

This is also our last newsletter of the year. Thanks to all our readers and supporters in 2014, and to everyone who has contributed, gotten involved in the comments, or shared our posts around on the web or with friends.

Upcoming events

2015 Australasian Aid Conference

12-13 February 2015. Registrations are open. For details, [visit the website](#).

Blog highlights

Looking back at a year of [an integrated DFAT](#)

Is PNG's Tuition Fee-Free policy [working](#)?

Matthew Dornan on the [Fiji budget](#)

Senate inquiry [on Australian aid to PNG](#)

On the blog

[Adrift in a Brisbane fog: the G20's development agenda](#) by Robin Davies

[“We can’t borrow money from overseas, just to send back overseas again”: a powerful but logically flawed argument that would devastate the Australian aid program](#) by Anthony Swan

[Papua New Guinea’s tuition fee-free policy: is it working?](#) By Grant Walton, Anthony Swan and Stephen Howes

[Fourth time’s the charm: a brief history of ‘free education’ policies in PNG](#) by Grant Walton and Anthony Swan

[The challenges of fighting corruption in Papua New Guinea](#) by Sam Koim

[Doing business in 2014 – the Pacific falls behind](#) by Jonathan Pryke and Stephen Howes

[Legal challenges, law reform and legal education – an interview with Lalotoa Mulitalo](#) by Lalotoa Mulitalo and Tess Newton Cain

[Fiji’s 2015 budget: ‘boring’, or just ‘business as usual’ for a big spending government?](#) By Matthew Dornan

[A year in the life: Australia’s integrated aid administration](#) by Robin Davies

[The 2015 Papua New Guinea budget: a more detailed assessment](#) by Paul Flanagan

In brief

[Pre-Christmas aid cuts on the horizon?](#)

[Right second time: Australia thaws on the Green Climate Fund](#)

[Human Rights Day isn’t what it used to be](#)

[A puzzling, piddling aid cut: Australian funding for UNEP](#)

[Senate inquiry to look at aid to PNG](#)

[Handle with care: results from the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

[Timor-Leste gender assessment: some good news, some bad](#)

This is the fortnightly newsletter of the [Development Policy Centre](#) at Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, published every second Friday.