

## Weekend links: Latin America, labour rights, development results & more

**Author :** Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood

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Starting with Latin America, John Perry writes of [violence in Honduras](#) and its role in [contributing to the flight of children to the US](#). In doing so he makes an interesting contrast between the dangers of Honduras and the comparative calm of Nicaragua. Further south, the *New Yorker* [covers](#) Pope Francis in Bolivia, situating the pontiff against the backdrop of liberation theology, its repression, and the murders of Catholic priests throughout Latin America by right wing death squads in the 1970s and 80s.

Michael Hobbes [argues](#) that flexing the muscles of consumer choice -- whether through punitive boycotts or encouraging shoppers into 'buying better' -- is no longer sufficient to make real changes in unethical labour practices around the world. The proliferation of middlemen and subcontractors in global manufacturing chains, and an increasing share of consumption claimed by the global South, render such consumer advocacy campaigns all but useless; in today's markets, Hobbes suggests, 'our real leverage is with our policies, not our purchases.' (Read some responses to the article on Hobbes' blog [here](#)).

While Hobbes focuses mainly on violations in the clothing industry, Amy Bracken [exposes the harsh conditions](#) faced by Haitian cane workers on sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic. Despite the 2007 enactment of DR-CAFTA, a free trade agreement that was promoted as a tool to improve labour conditions, the experience of workers and the Dominican Department of Labor show the labour and environment sections of DR-CAFTA are effectively impotent in the face of the American sugar lobby.

New [Pew research](#) concludes that, despite a near doubling of people who are considered 'middle income' (defined as living on \$10-20 per day) a global middle class remains 'more promise than reality'. Because the middle class is more likely to spend and invest, it has been touted as one of the keys to improved economic growth and stability on a community and national level (a 'rising tide lifts all boats' model). But while the percentage of people living in poverty dramatically reduced between 2001 and 2011, Pew's findings unfortunately show that global middle class appears to be growing at a much slower rate.

Alex Evans offers the [good and the bad news](#) from the recently concluded finance for development conference in Addis Ababa.

ABC's Rear Vision [paints a sad but fascinating picture](#) of Nagorno-Karabakh, a largely forgotten part of the South Caucasus, claimed by both Azerbaijan and Armenian, a conflict zone in the 1990s, and only barely peaceful now.

Finally, and more happily (or, at least, more cerebrally), Chris Roche has an [excellent blog post](#), looking at development's results agenda, offering his take on how it can be made to help, not hinder, transformative change.