

Weekend links: Malawi, PNG, graduating from poverty, remittances, hazard pay for Ebola workers, and the legacy of slavery

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In an [interview](#) with the Guardian, Africa's first female ex-president, Malawi's Joyce Banda, insists that gender played only a minor role in her rapid ascent to the presidency. She also discusses her efforts to address the systemic corruption and misappropriation of £154 million of aid money (corruption which led to donors freezing direct aid to Malawi, at a time when it made up 40% of the national budget).

Systemic corruption is also pointed to in an [article](#) published this week by Al-Jazeera America on the TB epidemic in Papua New Guinea, and Médecins sans Frontières' efforts to contain it in Gulf Province. The piece illustrates the weak reach of the state into places like Kerema Hospital, despite PNG's expanding economy.

What helps the ultra poor? New [research](#) conducted in six countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia, incorporating 10,500 households, tested a 'Graduation' program designed to help generate sustainable and lasting improvements in economic and social well-being. The study provides clear evidence that the package of interventions resulted in improvements across a range of development indicators including income and household consumption, although the authors caution that the magnitude of the improvements was often modest. (You can also read a short reader-friendly summary of the study [here](#)).

Another important source of income for the poor in many parts of the world is remittances. Nepal is one such country, which normally receives approximately US\$500 million per month. Given the huge influx of remittances being sent to the country in the aftermath of the earthquakes, it is heartening to [read](#) that a number of money transfer services have waived transaction fees to send money to Nepal. However, this contrasts with the disappointing [news](#) that Kenya has cracked down on the movement of funds to and from Somalia, which is among the most remittance-reliant countries in the world.

Also related to the movement of money is Newsweek's investigative [report](#) on the (literal) short-changing of local health workers who participated in the Ebola response in Liberia. In addition to highlighting the injustice experienced by those who were on the frontline of the epidemic, the piece offers a biting critique of the international humanitarian relief system and half-hearted health systems strengthening efforts.

In light of the evidently failed coup in Burundi last week, a review of the consequences of coups in Africa is salient. As [reported](#) on the Washington Post's Monkey Cage blog, it seems that coups in African states are about as likely to result in democratic elections as they are to result in prolonged military rule. Structural factors and dominant trade partners, political path dependency, and complex internal politics (particularly within military forces) all play a role.

Finally, this [essay](#) on the legacy of slavery in Senegal is an elegant reminder of how historical events and relationships can continue to profoundly influence contemporary livelihoods and well-being.