



# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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## SEA SALT AROUND THE WORLD IS CONTAMINATED BY PLASTIC, STUDIES SHOW

Sea salt around the world has been contaminated by plastic pollution, adding to experts' fears that microplastics are becoming ubiquitous in the environment and finding their way into the food chain via the salt in our diets. New studies have shown that tiny particles have been found in sea salt in the UK, France and Spain, as well as China and now the US. Researchers believe the majority of the contamination comes from microfibrils and single-use plastics such as water bottles, items that comprise the majority of plastic waste. Up to 12.7m tonnes of plastic enters the world's oceans every year, equivalent to dumping one garbage truck of plastic per minute into the world's oceans. "Not only are plastics pervasive in our society in terms of daily use, but they are pervasive in the environment," said Sherri Mason, a professor at the State University of New York at Fredonia, who led the latest research into plastic contamination in salt. Plastics are "ubiquitous, in the air, water, the seafood we eat, the beer we drink, the salt we use, plastics are just everywhere".

[Read More on The Guardian](#)



## SEVEN CLIMATE CHANGE PREDICTIONS THAT HAVE COME TRUE

At face value, you might think that the article's topic is climate change. The title of the article clues us in though as to the real topic: trust. Where it starts is where many people are at: They don't trust climate science conclusions. The author, Justin Gillis, starts with a topic of current interest, the eclipse, to draw interest. Gillis then lays out a number of historical predictions that climate science has made that have been correct.

1. Temperatures will rise in response to emissions of greenhouse gases
2. The average rise in temperature
3. As the surface of the earth is warmed, the temperature in the highest reaches of the atmosphere would cool
4. The Arctic will warm especially fast
5. The oceans will rise
6. We will see heavier rainstorms
7. Heat waves will increase

Nevertheless, this is a great way to help increase trust in climate change. Ask the question: Why should we trust climate science? Ask people why they trust other science, why they trust weather reports (even if with a grain of salt), why they trust medicines.

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## Estimated Economic Impact of Vaccinations In 73 Low And Middle Income Countries, 2001-2020

The objective of this report is to estimate the economic impact likely to be achieved by efforts to vaccinate against 10 vaccine-preventable diseases between 2001 and 2020 in 73 low- and middle-income countries largely supported by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. In the 73 countries, vaccinations given between 2001 and 2020 will avert over 20 million deaths and save US\$ 350 billion in cost of illness. The deaths and disability prevented by vaccinations given during the two decades will result in estimated lifelong productivity gains totalling US\$ 330 billion and US\$ 9 billion, respectively. Over the lifetimes of the vaccinated cohorts, the same vaccinations will save an estimated US\$ 5 billion in treatment costs. The broader economic and social value of these vaccinations is estimated at US\$ 820 billion. By preventing significant costs and potentially increasing economic productivity among some of the world's poorest countries, the impact of immunization goes well beyond health.

[Read More on World Health Organization](#)

## One of the World's Most Urgent Issues For Maternal and Newborn Health

MamaYe continues to push for good representation of maternal and newborn health (MNH) reporting in the news. They focus on making MNH a political priority, and they work to ensure that everybody has a role to play to change the hope of Nigerian families from fatality to survival on pregnancy and childbirth. One of the strategies that has worked for them is quarterly parley with journalists who are members of the State-led Accountability Mechanisms for Maternal and Newborn Health SLAM in the States where they work. The SLAM is made up of sub-committees on Evidence, Advocacy, and Knowledge Management and Communication. These committees produce evidence materials and advocacy briefs that are communicated to the government and the populace, to influence decisions on maternal and newborn health interventions. The major lesson learned was that many media organisations are ready and willing to partner with development organisations. However, they need capacity building to produce programmes and materials that are relevant to MNH cause.

[Read More on Mamaye](#)



## Texas Calls in U.S. Air Force to Counter Post-Storm Surge in Mosquitoes

Texas has launched aerial attacks on mosquitoes swarming coastal regions of the state and threatening to spread disease and hinder disaster recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. U.S. Air Force C-130 cargo planes began spraying insecticides over three eastern Texas counties and will expand to other areas. About 1.85 million acres have been treated. Officials hope the spraying can avoid outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases. Texas reported 441 human cases of West Nile virus and 21 deaths since the start of 2016. It reported 342 cases of Zika virus during the same period, including one likely spread by a mosquito bite this year. Most mosquitoes that appear after floods are not the disease-carrying varieties but can hurt recovery operations by swarming residents and disaster workers during cleanup efforts. The C-130 cargo planes operating from an air force base in San Antonio joined two smaller aircraft that sprayed in south Texas. The big planes also were used to help control mosquitoes after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Gustav.

[Read More on Reuters](#)



## The Miracle Weed Killer Was Supposed to Save Farms. Instead, It's Devastating Them

The damage in northeast Arkansas and across the Midwest, sickly soybeans, trees and other crops, has become emblematic of a deepening crisis in American agriculture. Farmers are locked in an arms race between ever-stronger weeds and ever-stronger weed killers. The dicamba system, approved for use for the first time this spring, was supposed to break the cycle and guarantee weed control in soybeans and cotton. The herbicide, used in combination with a genetically modified dicamba-resistant soybean, promised better control of unwanted plants such as pigweed, which has become resistant to common weed killers. The problem, farmers and weed scientists say, is that dicamba has drifted from the fields where it was sprayed, damaging millions of acres of unprotected soybeans and other crops in what some are calling a man-made disaster. Critics say that the herbicide was approved by federal officials without enough data, particularly on the critical question of whether it could drift off target. The backlash against dicamba has spurred lawsuits, state and federal investigations, and one argument that ended in a farmer's shooting death and related murder charges.

[Read More on The Washington Post](#)

## Five Things That Will Blow Your Mind About Alberta's Oil and Gas Wells

1. There's one well for every 10 people living in Alberta. Alberta is absolutely covered with oil and gas wells. More than 450,000 wells have been drilled in the province, reaching from rural and Indigenous communities right into the heart of its biggest cities.
2. The cleanup bill for these wells is greater than the value of the entire oil and gas industry. Over 330,000 wells in Alberta either need to be cleaned up right now or in the coming years. "Full cycle" reclamation cost can range from \$100,000, up to millions of dollars for a really difficult well.
3. Alberta's oil and gas companies have figured out how to pull off "bankruptcy-for-profit", and it's the scheme of the century. In Alberta, conventional oil and gas companies have been staving off bankruptcy by taking on massive debts, and running a \$32 billion deficit from 2009-15.
4. An upcoming supreme court case could leave all of us on the hook for industry cleanups across the country.
5. There's a way to fix this. And it could put Alberta back to work and spark a reclamation boom.

[Read More on The Leap](#)



## UK to Ban Diesel, Gasoline Car Sales By 2040, Follows France, Norway, Holland Bans

The United Kingdom will follow in the footsteps of some European countries as it announced plans to ban the sale of gasoline- and diesel-powered cars by the year 2040. The initiative closely follows a similar announcement from France, which also declared 2040 as the year it will phase out fossil-fuel vehicles. Norway and the Netherlands have also announced similar plans, though both plan on banning the sale of gasoline and diesel cars by 2025. The UK's decision was announced by the country's Environment Minister, Michael Gove, who also outlined a handful of proposals to ensure the goal is met. One proposal would include a "scrappage scheme," similar to a cash-for-clunkers initiative, to trade in fossil-fuel powered cars for more efficient electric vehicles. Although the UK would prioritize the sale of battery-electric vehicles, hybrids would still be permitted, per Gove's announcement. Another would see multiple "clean air zones" created in different cities, which would involve a tax on motorists driving gasoline or diesel cars. However, the government made it clear it will look at additional taxes only as a last resort. The UK will also invest heavily in solutions that can have an impact in the short term.

[Read More on Green Car Reports](#)



## Exercising During Pregnancy is Good For Mother and Baby

Spanish researchers have clarified doubts over the physical activity recommended during pregnancy. Their work highlights how exercise should be taken not only by healthy, previously active women, but that it is also a good time to adopt a healthy lifestyle. There are clear advantages for both the mother and baby. Excessive weight gain, pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, caesarean section, lower back pain and urinary incontinence are some of the risks of leading an unhealthy lifestyle during pregnancy. A study carried out by experts from Camilo José Cela University (UCJC), published in the *Journal of American Medicine Association (JAMA)*, defines the physical exercise patterns during pregnancy which have shown major physiological benefits for both mother and baby. The new study confirms that there is strong scientific evidence maintaining that moderate exercise during pregnancy is safe and beneficial for both mother and baby. Among the confirmed benefits are: the prevention of excessive weight gain (a key factor in the intergenerational transmission of obesity) and a lower risk of fetal macrosomia (babies who are born weighing more than 4 kilograms), pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, caesarean section, lower back pain, pelvic pain and urinary incontinence.

[Read More on Science Daily](#)

## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY:

### African Health Minsters Meet in Zimbabwe

African health ministers recently met in Zimbabwe for the 67th Session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee and adopted a range of actions intended to strengthen health systems in countries and eventually lead to Universal Health Coverage (UHC). UHC means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It enables everyone to access the services that address the most important causes of disease and death, and ensures that these services are of sufficient quality to be effective. UHC is the eighth target under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3. To achieve UHC, WHO advises Member States to build strong and resilient health systems that can ensure public health security, can deal with effects of climate change and are capable of ending deadly epidemics such as Ebola. Such health systems require good health stewardship, adequate financing for health, qualified and motivated health workforce, access to quality medicines and health products, functional health information systems and people-centred service delivery systems.

[Read More on Bulawayo](#)



## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH:

### How One Indigenous Community is Beating the Odds

In northern Ontario, surrounding James Bay and Hudson Bay, lie six remote First Nations communities. One community stands out, by virtue of its low rates of suicide and mental health services utilization. This community shares a history of oppression, victimization and suffering with its sister communities. It also endured the relatively recent trauma of a natural disaster. The strength of community members' connection to the land emerged as the most striking finding. Participants of this research spoke of this connection as woven through mental, physical, spiritual and emotional dimensions of the self. They described it as foundational to their faith, uniting those with otherwise differing spiritual beliefs and possibly stabilizing the community in the face of other differences. "Back to the land," said one community member. "When you're there, it's like your spirit, your mind and your physical well-being, everything improves when you're out there; it's like you rejuvenate while you're out there."

[Read More on The Conversation](#)



## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"This is the time to talk about climate change. This is the time that the president and the E.P.A. and whoever makes decisions needs to talk about climate change... If this (ie. Hurricane Irma) isn't climate change, I don't know what is. This is a truly, truly poster child for what is to come."

Tomas Regalado, the Republican mayor of Miami

[Read More on The Guardian](#)

## EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Sept 25-27	Canadian Association of Community Health Centres 2017 Conference	Calgary Canada	<a href="https://www.cachc.ca/2017conference/?utm_source=CACHC+e-News&amp;utm_campaign=95ef99308c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_06_20&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_term=0_78768ad041-95ef99308c-306041945">https://www.cachc.ca/2017conference/?utm_source=CACHC+e-News&amp;utm_campaign=95ef99308c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_06_20&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_term=0_78768ad041-95ef99308c-306041945</a>
Sept 29	Governance of Pharmaceuticals Policy Workshop	Toronto Canada	<a href="http://www.pharmacy.utoronto.ca/whocc">http://www.pharmacy.utoronto.ca/whocc</a>
Sept 30	The 6th Annual uOttawa Global Health Conference	Ottawa Canada	<a href="http://www.aghnconference.com/">http://www.aghnconference.com/</a>
Oct 11-14	The 48th Union World Conference on Lung Health: Accelerating Toward Elimination	Guadalajara Mexico	<a href="http://guadalajara.worldlunghealth.org/about-us/welcome">http://guadalajara.worldlunghealth.org/about-us/welcome</a>
Oct 12	Women Leaders in Global Health Conference	Stanford USA	<a href="https://www.wlghconference.org/">https://www.wlghconference.org/</a>
Oct 19-22	Planet In Focus Film Festival	Toronto Canada	<a href="http://planetinfocus.org/">http://planetinfocus.org/</a>
Oct 29-31	Canadian Conference for Global Health	Ottawa Canada	<a href="http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health">http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health</a>
Nov 13-17	4th Global Forum on Human Resources for Health: Building the Health Workforce of the Future	Dublin Ireland	<a href="http://hrhforum2017.ie/">http://hrhforum2017.ie/</a>
Nov 22	Preventative, Proactive and Preparatory Ethics: Avoiding Pitfalls in Global Health Research	Montreal Quebec	<a href="https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/u/0/#inbox/15e726e2c34d0255">https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/u/0/#inbox/15e726e2c34d0255</a>
May 8-11	2018 International Congress on Integrative Medicine and Health	Maryland Baltimore	Abstracts accepted until October 11, 2017



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Who are the poor people in a country and where do they live? What is their level of access to quality Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services? What are the linkages of inadequate WASH services with health and nutrition? And what are the binding constraints to improving service delivery? These are the four key questions that a new World Bank initiative set out to answer. This initiative, the Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Poverty Diagnostic, encompasses 18 countries, ranging from fragile and conflict-affected states to middle-income countries.

Over the past three years, it has assessed the relationship of poverty, time, physical space and social space with drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as the knock-on effects on a person's life cycle. It was not designed just to answer the "What?" but to also look at the "So What?" and "Now What?" After all, water is life. And that is both a very simple and very complex relationship.

To better understand this relationship, this initiative undertook multidisciplinary research - developing innovative methods to fully appreciate the impacts of inadequate services on human development outcomes and identify the binding constraints to service delivery. Supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the initiative is a large-scale partnership between the World Bank's Water, Poverty, Governance, Health, Nutrition & Population teams and these countries. This work is especially relevant for the SDG era and as countries look to harness their precious WASH resources for maximum impact.

[Read More on The World Bank](#)



## BEHIND A \$13 SHIRT, A \$6-AN-HOUR WORKER



Before dawn six days a week, Norma Ulloa left the two-bedroom apartment she shared with four family members and boarded a bus that took her to a stifling factory on the outskirts of downtown Los Angeles. She spent 11 hours a day there, pinning Forever 21 tags on trendy little shirts and snipping away their loose threads in the one-room workshop. That work earned Ulloa about \$6 an hour, well below minimum wage in Los Angeles, according to a wage claim she filed with the state. Ulloa's claim is one of nearly 300 filed since 2007 by workers demanding back pay for producing Forever 21 clothing, according to a Los Angeles Times review of nearly 2,000 pages of state labor records.

Sewing factories and wholesale manufacturers have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to settle those workers' claims. Forever 21 has not had to pay a cent. Like other major clothing retailers, Forever 21 avoids paying factory workers' wage claims through a tangled labyrinth of middlemen that stands between the racks in its stores and the people who sew the clothes.

The company benefits from an 18-year-old state law that was originally intended to stamp out sweatshops but has come up short. The law allowed workers to recoup back wages from their factory boss, and any garment manufacturing company that does business with that person. Forever 21 says it is a retailer, not a manufacturer, and thus is always at least one step removed from Los Angeles factories. One paradox of that arm's-length relationship: Forever 21 says it often inspects factories abroad that produce its clothes as part of its "social responsibility to better protect workers," but it doesn't do that in Los Angeles. The company said it takes that approach because in California the Department of Labor enforces strict worker protections, whereas there's no government body that does that for overseas factories.

Budget brands like Forever 21 are putting more and more pressure on suppliers to keep prices low. Those sweatshop wages are the hidden cost of the bargains that make stores like Forever 21 impossible to resist for so many Americans. A knee-length Forever 21 dress made in one of the Los Angeles factories investigated by the government came with a price tag of \$24.90. But it would have cost \$30.43 to make that dress with workers earning the \$7.25 federal minimum wage and even more to pay the \$12 Los Angeles minimum, according to previously unpublished investigative results from the Labor Department. Forever 21 would have had to pay 50% more in order for sewing contractors to pay workers the federal minimum, the investigation found.

[Read More on LA Times](#)



## MENSTRUATION MATTERS: THAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE

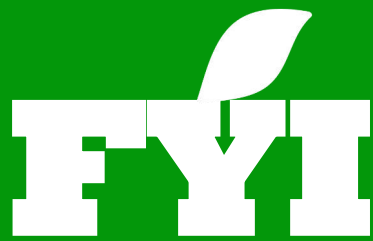


In developing countries, women and girls face serious challenges when it comes to managing their periods. This can have a devastating effect on school attendance. They lack access to affordable, hygienic menstrual products and are forced to use improvised materials, such as rags, that are uncomfortable and can lead to leaks and infections.

They also may lack knowledge and understanding about what menstruation is, and their options for managing it. To make matters worse, often, social taboos about menstruation exclude women from certain activities, such as cooking or praying, and expose them to bullying and teasing. For school-age girls, this situation can have far reaching consequences. Schools in developing countries often don't have clean, private, safe latrines; many have no separate latrines for girls at all. Even when latrines are available, there is frequently no clean water within or near toilets or bathrooms, and there is nowhere for girls to clean up and discreetly dispose of used menstrual products, or to wash and dry reusable sanitary pads. As a result, in some cases, girls skip school during their periods. For example, it is estimated that the price of menstrual hygiene supplies is the driver of 36% of girls' absenteeism from school in Rwanda. Some girls even drop out of school altogether.

This can have a detrimental impact on girls later in life, as girls with fewer years of education earn less and are more likely to be married as a child. Conversely, educated girls and young women are usually healthier than girls who didn't go to school; they also tend to have healthier children and will share their knowledge and health seeking behaviors on health and hygiene with their children.

[Read More on Global Partnership](#)



## HOUSTON'S FLOODING SHOWS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU IGNORE SCIENCE AND LET DEVELOPERS RUN RAMPART



Since Houston, Texas was founded nearly two centuries ago, Houstonians have been treating its wetlands as stinky, mosquito-infested blots in need of drainage. Even after it became a widely accepted scientific fact that wetlands can soak up large amounts of flood water, the city continued to pave over them. The watershed of the White Oak Bayou river, which includes much of northwest Houston, is a case in point. From 1992 to 2010, this area lost more than 70% of its wetlands.

In recent days, the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey has raised water levels in some parts of the watershed high enough to completely cover a Cadillac. The vanished wetlands wouldn't have prevented flooding, but they would have made it less painful, experts say. The Harvey-wrought devastation is just the latest example of the consequences of Houston's gung-ho approach to development. The city, the largest in the US with no zoning laws, is a case study in limiting government regulations and favoring growth, often at the expense of the environment. As water swamps many of its neighborhoods, it's now also a cautionary tale of sidelining science and plain common sense. Given the Trump administration's assault on environmental protections, it's one that Americans elsewhere should pay attention to.

Too few people have flood insurance. Although federal rules require certain homeowners to carry it, those rules are based on outdated flood data. Only a little over a quarter of the homes in "high risk" areas in Harris County, where Houston sits, have flood insurance. The share is even lower, 15%, in many other areas that will also no doubt suffer water damage from Harvey. Not that Houston has ever been a stickler for federal rules. To get a permit under the Clean Water Act, developers who build in protected wetland areas must submit paperwork showing they've completed mitigation measures. In 2015, Texas A&M and non-profit research group HARC analyzed a sample of permits issued from 1990 to 2012 in the greater Houston area. They found that in fewer than half of the cases had the developers submitted complete paperwork, and in two thirds of the cases, there was no documentation that any type of mitigation had happened. Another study by two groups looked at a dozen projects that had obtained permits, and found that only two of them had successfully offset wetland destruction, seven were partially successful, and three were complete failures.

[Read More on Quartz](#)



## IRMA: CUBA SENT HUNDREDS OF DOCTOR TO CARRIBEAN ISLANDS DEVASTED BY HURRICAN



Cuba has sent doctors to several Caribbean islands ravaged by Hurricane Irma. More than 750 health workers have arrived in Antigua, Barbuda, Saint Kitts, Nevis, Saint Lucia, the Bahamas, Dominica and Haiti. They have been told to follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Public Health (Minsap) and to contribute to aiding the recovery of regions that have been hit by the hurricane. "The collaboration of the Central Medical Cooperation Unit, together with the Minsap Management Center, and our embassies, have maintained the communication to assess the damages and assess what help our own collaborators could provide," said Regla Angulo Pardo, the director of the Central Unit of Medial Cooperation in Cuba.

The nation of 11 million people has a history of sending medical staff when other nations are in need, having done so during west Africa's Ebola crisis in 2014 and 2015. A brigade of more than 600 Cuban health workers went to Sierra Leone in 2014 to help tackle the crisis. They also sent 1,200 health workers to Haiti after the nation was hit with an earthquake in 2010. Cuba's international medical mission has won the socialist state many friends. This tradition can be traced back to 1960, when Cuba sent a group of doctors to Chile, who had been hit by a powerful earthquake, followed by a team of 50 to Algeria in 1963.

[Read More on Independent](#)



## 5 WAYS EDUCATION CAN END POVERTY



Ensuring quality education for all is central to the achievement of all 17 Global Goals, in particular the goal to end extreme poverty.

1. Education reduces poverty. Absolute poverty could be reduced by 30%.
2. Education increases individual earnings. Each additional year of schooling increases earnings by up to 10%. For each \$1 invested in an additional year of schooling, earnings increase by \$5 in low-income countries and \$2.5 in lower-middle income countries.
3. Education reduces economic inequalities. If workers from low socio-economic backgrounds had the same education as more advantaged counterparts, disparity in working poverty between the two groups would shrink by 39%.
4. Education promotes economic growth. 50% of the difference in growth rates between East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa between 1965 and 2010 is due to children completing school.
5. Education helps save the planet. The creation of green industries that will curb climate change will rely on highly-skilled, educated workers. Primary and secondary education can provide future farmers with critical knowledge about sustainability challenges in agriculture.

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