



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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ILO POSTPONES DECISION ON TOBACCO INDUSTRY COOPERATION

The International Labor Organization's (ILO) governing body has deferred its decision on whether to end the agency's embattled relationship with tobacco industry players. The governing body was supposed to come out with a decision about whether to sever financial ties with tobacco companies and organizations funded by the industry, but discussions among its tripartite governing bodies, composed of governments, workers' groups and employers, remained in deadlock. The tobacco industry currently funds two ILO programs, amounting to roughly \$15 million. The governing body has now called on the ILO director-general to present an "integrated strategy to address decent work deficits in the tobacco sector" during the agency's 332nd session in March 2018. This is the second time it has postponed the decision this year. "It is time for the ILO to let it go," said Mary Assunta, senior policy advisor for the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA). ILO's programs, funded by the industry, are "not real solutions and serve to divert public attention from a more meaningful and long-term ways to address them," according to SEATCA.

[Read More on Devex](#)



2017 IS SET TO BE IN TOP THREE HOTTEST YEARS, WITH RECORD BREAKING EXTREME WEATHER

It is very likely that 2017 will be one of the three hottest years on record, with many high-impact events including catastrophic hurricanes and floods, debilitating heatwaves and drought. Long-term indicators of climate change such as increasing carbon dioxide concentrations, sea level rise and ocean acidification continue unabated. Arctic sea ice coverage remains below average and previously stable Antarctic sea ice extent was at or near a record low. "The past three years have all been in the top three years in terms of temperature records. This is part of a long term warming trend," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas. Extraordinary weather has witnessed, including temperatures topping 50 degrees Celsius in Asia, record-breaking hurricanes in rapid succession in the Caribbean and Atlantic reaching as far as Ireland, devastating monsoon flooding affecting many millions of people and a relentless drought in East Africa.

[Read More on World Meteorological Organization](#)
[See Also on The Conversation](#)



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In Maternal and Child Health, The Numbers Matter. Here's Why

Nigeria falls in the 33 countries with the highest newborn mortality rates and/or burden of neonatal deaths. In Nigeria, the stillbirth rate is very high; in 2015, there were 42.9 per 1,000 births, and 27 newborn die every hour. These neonatal deaths account for 32 per cent of all under-five deaths. Most of these deaths are preventable through good quality care for women during pregnancy and at childbirth. MamaYe-Evidence for Action is actively engaged in some interventions and campaigns that make life-saving changes for mothers and babies. One of these interventions is the Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR). The goal is to ensure improved reporting and documentation of perinatal deaths for response purposes. Kenya is ranked among 20 countries with high burden of newborn deaths. The country has committed to address Maternal and Child Survival, through commitment to provision of Free Maternity Services and roll out of Reproductive Maternal Newborn Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Framework 2016 and is set to meet the third Sustainable Development Goal.

[Read More on Mamaye](#)

Rich, Fat and Diabetic: The Qatari Crisis

Globally, obesity rates are climbing and so are the rates of its associated health problems. For Qatar, one of the world's smallest countries, it's a huge issue. The Middle East has some of the highest rates of obesity in world and in Qatar, the tiny nation of 2.5 million people in the middle of the Arab Gulf, 40% of the population is obese and 20% have type II diabetes. Worldwide, the average rate of type II diabetes is half of that of Qatar at 8%, while in Australia around 9% of the population are affected. The discovery of oil changed the Qatari way of life entirely, and this change of circumstance and its incompatibility with their culture has contributed to the current health crisis. All who live in Qatar enjoy a high standard of living including no income tax and a 0.1% unemployment rate. Most households have butlers or maids with an average of one domestic servant for every two Qatari citizens. Doha is a modern metropolis sprinkled with five star hotels, a huge choice of malls and world class cultural attractions. The Qatari diet has been overthrown, from the traditional Middle Eastern fare to a more westernised cuisine.

[Read More on Medium](#)



Catastrophic Medical Insurance in China

China's medical insurance system has changed dramatically in the past two decades. The country's most established programme, the Urban Employee Basic Medical Insurance, dates back to the mid-1990s and initially covered only 109 million employees of state-owned and collective enterprises. In the early 2000s, the Chinese Government established two additional insurance programmes, the New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS) for rural residents and the Urban Resident Medical Insurance (URMI) programme for self-employed and unemployed urban residents. These three insurance schemes enabled China to achieve near universal health care coverage, with more than 1.3 billion Chinese (about 97% of the population) having some form of medical insurance. However, this nationwide coverage was insufficient for service provision and financial protection, and health-care expenses remained a concern for patients. For instance, insurance reimbursement rates were as low as 30 to 40% for NCMS before 2009. With high out-of-pocket costs, catastrophic illnesses were often financially devastating for patients and led families into poverty.

[Read More on The Lancet](#)



Combination of El Nino and 2016 Ecuador Earthquake Likely Worsened Zika Outbreak

A new research commentary suggests the Ecuador earthquake left more people exposed to disease carrying mosquitos, and climate variability associated with the 2014-2016 El Niño event created more favorable mosquito breeding grounds. Warmer temperatures and increased rainfall, combined with destruction of the region's infrastructure and a population influx into large cities, likely caused the number of Zika cases to increase 12-fold in just three months. As of September 2017, approximately 6,811 suspected and confirmed cases of Zika have occurred in Ecuador, according to a World Health Organization report. The new commentary suggests changes in the climate can amplify the worst effects of natural disasters and disease outbreaks in socially vulnerable regions. Areas that are already stressed by short-term climate changes like El Niño can be sent over the edge due to a catastrophe and may struggle to recuperate afterwards.

[Read More on Science Daily](#)

Alarm Over Decline in Flying Insects

It's known as the windscreen phenomenon. When you stop your car after a drive, there seem to be far fewer squashed insects than there used to be. Scientists have long suspected that insects are in dramatic decline, but new evidence confirms this. Research at more than 60 protected areas in Germany suggests flying insects have declined by more than 75% over almost 30 years, and the causes are unknown. "This confirms what everybody's been having as a gut feeling; the windscreen phenomenon where you squash fewer bugs as the decades go by," said Caspar Hallmann of Radboud University in The Netherlands. "This is the first study that looked into the total biomass of flying insects and it confirms our worries." They stressed the importance of adopting measures known to be beneficial for insects, including strips of flowers around farmland and minimising the effects of intensive agriculture. The finding was even more worrying given that it was happening in nature reserves, which are meant to protect insects and other living species, the researchers said.

[Read More on EIN World News](#)



Severe Pollution Hits Indian Capital, Causing Health Worries

A thick gray haze enveloped India's capital as air pollution hit hazardous levels, prompting local officials to ask that schools shut down and a half marathon scheduled for later in November be called off. The readings of the government's air quality index hovered between 350 and 450, indicating that the health impact of breathing the air was "severe." The highest reading on the Central Pollution Control Board's index is 500. The pollutants that had the maximum impact on the reading were PM 2.5 and PM 10 particulate matter. The Indian Medical Association said New Delhi was in the midst of a "public health emergency" and appealed to the city government to halt sports and other outdoor activities in schools. The association also said the Delhi Half Marathon, scheduled for Nov. 19, was likely to leave those participating especially badly hit because the air quality is worst during the early part of the day, when the run takes place.

[Read More on ABC News](#)

Delhi Schools Close Due to Dangerous Smog

Officials in Delhi have shut down schools due to high levels of smog that pose a threat to human health. Pollution levels in the city are 40 times higher than the amount WHO says is safe for long-term exposure.

[Read More on Hindustan Times](#)



Tropical Forests Caused the Highest CO₂ Levels in 2000 Years, Says NASA's Orbiting Carbon Observatory

By now, it's clear that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions have created and continue to exacerbate a seismic shift in the global climate. Historically, the carbon dioxide balance on Earth has been regulated in part by the planet's tropical forests, which absorb the gas in large amounts through the natural process of plant metabolism. But humans have put so much stuff in the atmosphere that global temperatures are rising, the forests are overheating and can no longer do their job, and we're potentially entering a cycle of climate catastrophe. NASA announced on a press call, that one of their CO₂-mapping satellites, the Orbiting Carbon Observatory, detected the largest annual rise in the amount of the greenhouse gas in the atmosphere in at least 2,000 years. The scientists explained that from 2015 to 2016, the planet went through an unprecedented El Niño event. El Niño events are complex weather patterns that occur with some regularity, and have been, experts believe, for thousands of years. But the 2015-2016 version was one of the strongest in recorded history, and had an especially severe impact on the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

[Read More on Quartz](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY: Mass Shootings, Climate, Discrimination: Why Government's Fear of Data Threatens Us All

In the aftermath of the massacre of 26 people in a small-town Texas church, you might have seen that the killer used a gun called an AR-15. It's a popular weapon, relatively easy to use, endlessly customizable, military in appearance. How popular? It's the same gun that a killer used in the massacre of 58 people at a Las Vegas concert last month, and by the killer who murdered 49 people in a nightclub in Orlando, and the one at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. And the movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. It's also the gun, that someone in Texas used to shoot *back* at the killer at First Baptist Church, accurately enough to pinpoint places his tactical vest didn't protect. The U.S. government doesn't keep track of how many AR-15s are out there or who owns them. Only through painstaking excavation of crime reports could anyone even begin to figure out which crimes involved AR-15s or when AR-15s stopped crimes, much less where those ARs came from, how they were stored, or how they were modified. That data is either off-limits or simply doesn't exist.

[Read More on The Wired](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH: Indigenous Communities and McMaster Lab Partner in Water Quality Research

Two Indigenous communities will be working with a McMaster University research team to study the water on their land to determine the source of contaminants and develop an app that gives real-time updates on the local water quality. Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario and the Lubicon Cree Nation of Little Buffalo in Alberta will be part of this three-year project that has secured \$950,000 in funding. Part of the research project will also involve studying the health impacts of the water quality on both communities. Dawn Martin-Hill, principal investigator of the project and a resident on the Six Nations reserve, said both communities have had issues with their water for many years. The project will be looking at some of the health problems in people and animals over the years, and see if they may be related to the poor water quality, Martin-Hill added.

[Read More on CBC News](#)

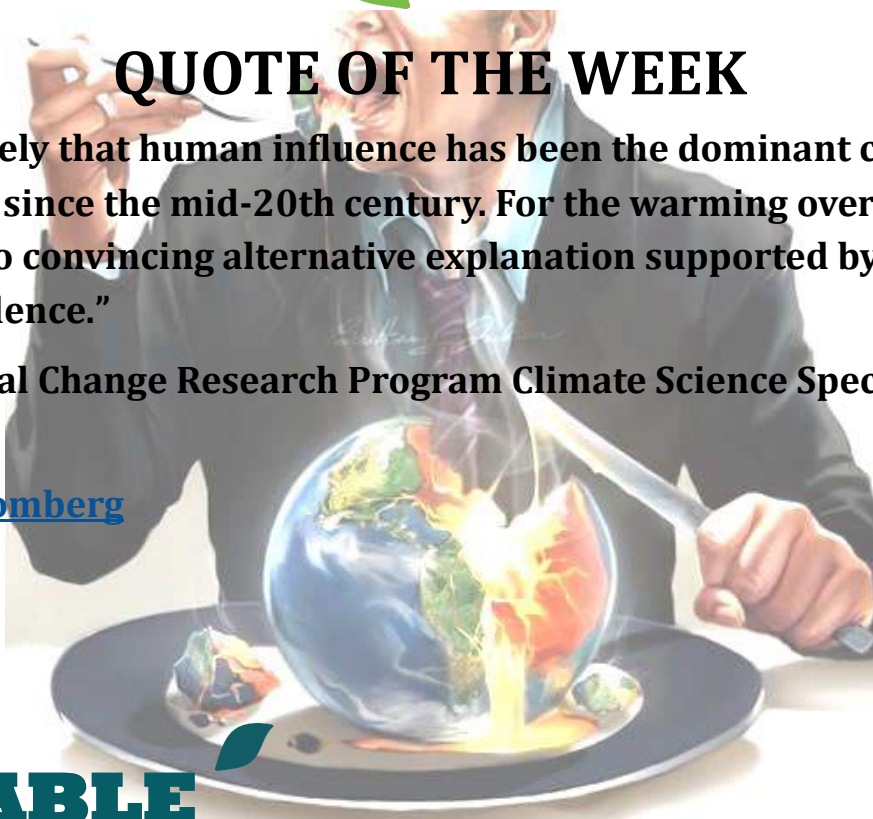


QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“It is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. For the warming over the last century, there is no convincing alternative explanation supported by the extent of the observational evidence.”

**From the U.S. Global Change Research Program Climate Science Special Report
November 2017**

[Read More on Bloomberg](#)



EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Nov 13-17	4th Global Forum on Human Resources for Health: Building the Health Workforce of the Future	Dublin Ireland	http://hrhforum2017.ie/
Nov 22	Preventative, Proactive and Preparatory Ethics: Avoiding Pitfalls in Global Health Research	Montreal Quebec	https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/u/0/#inbox/15e726e2c34d0255
Nov 27	Stephen Lewis in Conversation with Samantha Nutt	Toronto Canada	http://www.ryerson.ca/fcs/news-and-events/events/2017/11/where-in-the-world-is-the-world-headed/
Mar 9-10	The 16th Annual Crossroads Interdisciplinary Health Research Conference	Halifax Canada	https://dalcrossroads.com/registration/
Apr 28-29	PEGASUS Conference	Toronto Canada	https://www.pegasusconference.ca/
May 8-11	2018 International Congress on Integrative Medicine and Health	Maryland Baltimore	Abstracts accepted until October 11, 2017



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BREASTFEEDING MOTHER SUPPORT E-NEWSLETTER: WORKING TOGETHER CREATING PARTNERSHIPS



The theme of the Breastfeeding Mother Support E-Newsletter is Working TOGETHER Creating PARTNERSHIPS. Mothers around the world face many factors that interfere in the success of their breastfeeding journey: a lack of support from family members, misinformation from their health care team, being sidelined for breastfeeding in public, or for requesting to express milk while at work, to name a few. But what happens when you turn these factors around and mothers are surrounded by supportive family members, midwives who understand breastfeeding as the first connection between mother and baby, businesses that openly display their support for breastfeeding in public, breastfeeding counselors who reach out to mothers to breastfeed even in the harshest of environments, and children whose worlds are tightly woven with breastfeeding?

In this issue we share some of these success stories from mothers around the world and the support that is being built around them to ensure a rewarding breastfeeding journey. We hope this fuels your passion, your energy, your commitment to keep working towards normalizing breastfeeding.

[Produced by the World Alliance For Breastfeeding Action](#)



HOW THE COFFEE INDUSTRY IS ABOUT TO GET ROASTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE



Coffee demand around the world is shifting. Europe still accounts for almost one third of the coffee consumed worldwide, but China has doubled its consumption in just the last five years. As for Canada, numbers remain robust as more than 90 per cent of adult Canadians drink coffee. Several recent studies suggest coffee is a healthy choice, possibly one factor in the rise in coffee drinkers. Either way, demand is strong in most Western countries, which puts more pressure on coffee-producing countries. However, as climate change looms, there's a real threat to coffee's global success story.

Coffee is the most traded commodity in the world after oil. Coffee beans are grown in more than 60 countries and allow 25 million families worldwide to make a living. Brazil is by far the largest producer, followed by Vietnam and Colombia. Globally, 2017 could be a record year, as the world will likely produce well over 153 million 60-kilogram bags of coffee. Coffee futures are down as a result, but we are far from seeing a bumper crop. Production has been modestly shifting over the past few years. With good rainfalls in Brazil and favourable weather patterns in other regions of the world, Mother Nature has so far spared coffee growers, but their luck may be running out. There is growing consensus among experts that climate change will severely affect coffee crops over the next 80 years. By 2100, more than 50 per cent of the land used to grow coffee will no longer be arable.

A combination of effects, resulting from higher temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, will make the land where coffee is currently grown unsuitable for its production. As climate conditions become critical, the livelihoods of millions of farmers are at risk and production capacity is jeopardized. Other potential contributors to this predicted downfall are pests and diseases. As climate conditions become critical, the livelihoods of millions of farmers are at risk and production capacity is jeopardized. Pests and diseases will migrate to regions where temperatures are adequate for survival, and most farmers won't be ready. Many will simply choose to grow other crops less vulnerable to climate change. Others may attempt to increase their coffee production, but the quality will almost certainly be compromised.

[Read More on The Conversation](#)



GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF ABORTIONS BY SAFETY



Global estimates of unsafe abortions have been produced for 1995, 2003, and 2008. However, reconceptualization of the framework and methods for estimating abortion safety is needed owing to the increased availability of simple methods for safe abortion (eg, medical abortion), the increasingly widespread use of misoprostol outside formal health systems in contexts where abortion is legally restricted, and the need to account for the multiple factors that affect abortion safety.

Of the 55·7 million abortions that occurred worldwide each year between 2010–14, it was estimated that 30·6 million (54·9%, 90% uncertainty interval 49·9–59·4) were safe, 17·1 million (30·7%, 25·5–35·6) were less safe, and 8·0 million (14·4%, 11·5–18·1) were least safe. Thus, 25·1 million (45·1%, 40·6–50·1) abortions each year between 2010 and 2014 were unsafe, with 24·3 million (97%) of these in developing countries. The proportion of unsafe abortions was significantly higher in developing countries than developed countries (49·5% vs 12·5%). When grouped by the legal status of abortion, the proportion of unsafe abortions was significantly higher in countries with highly restrictive abortion laws than in those with less restrictive laws.

Increased efforts are needed, especially in developing countries, to ensure access to safe abortion. The paucity of empirical data is a limitation of these findings. Improved in-country data for health services and innovative research to address these gaps are needed to improve future estimates. Despite scientific advances that enable the provision of safe abortion at the primary care level, unsafe abortions persist and result in a high burden of complications, maternal death, and substantial costs to women, families, and health systems.

WHO defines unsafe abortion as a procedure for termination of a pregnancy done by an individual who does not have the necessary training or in an environment not conforming to minimal medical standards. The people, skills, and environment needed to meet medical standards are outlined in WHO guidelines, which are updated periodically. In the 25 years since unsafe abortion was defined, evidence has evolved and simple technologies have made the provision of safe abortions possible at the primary care level and by health workers other than doctors. The conditions leading to a safe abortion are in turn affected by numerous factors, including the laws and policies on abortion, the socioeconomic conditions, the availability of safe abortion services, and the stigma surrounding abortion. Stigma related to seeking or provision of abortion is increasingly being recognised as having an effect on how and where women access care and who provides care.

[Read More on The Lancet](#)



HSBC PLEDGES \$100 BILLION OF FINANCE BY 2025 TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

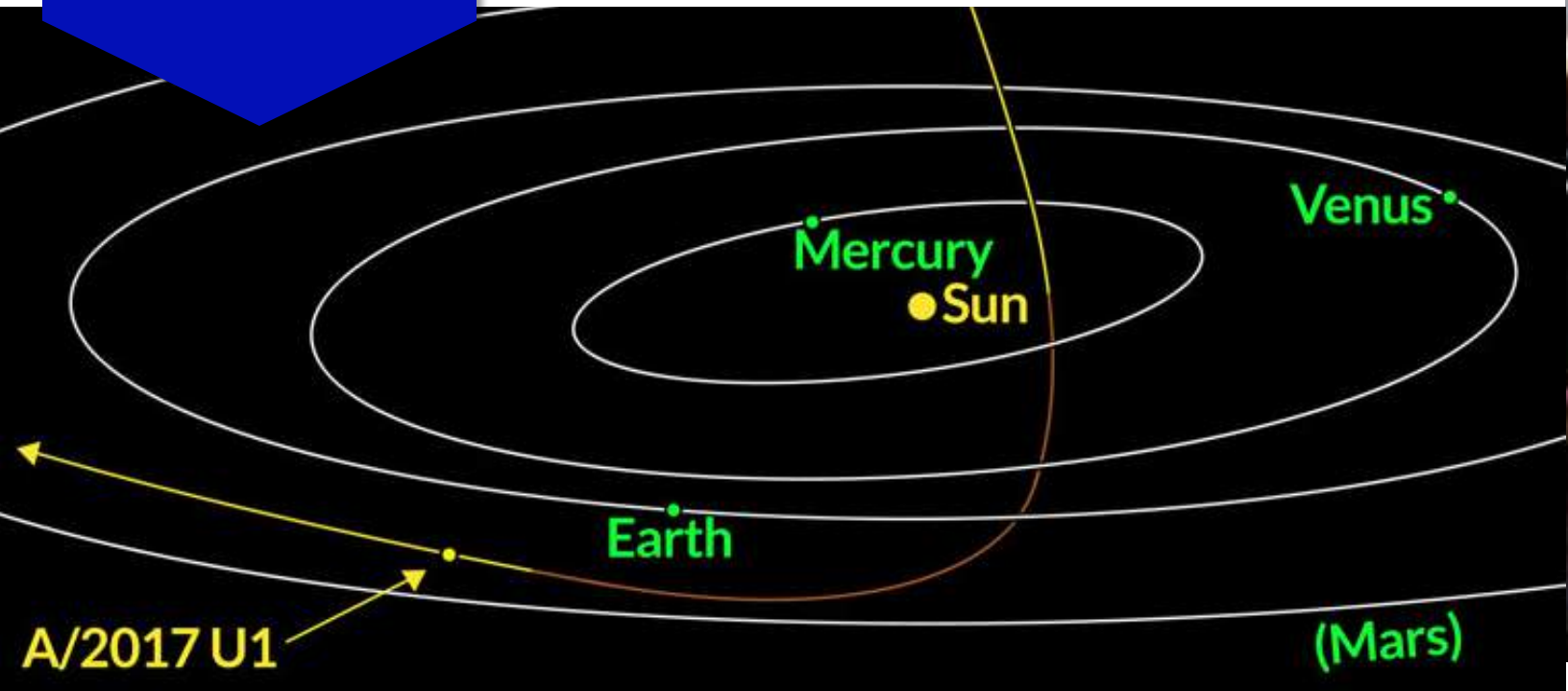


HSBC has pledged to provide \$100 billion in financing and investment by 2025 to help combat climate change. HSBC said it will facilitate financial flows to help boost support for clean energy and lower carbon technologies. "This will involve direct lending, bonds and project finance, alongside new products in asset management," an HSBC spokesman said. Over recent years, HSBC has helped develop standards for issuers of green bonds and has issued its own 500 million euro (\$580 million) green bond.

[Read More on Business Insider](#)



HOW SCIENTISTS DISCOVERED OUR FIRST INTERSTELLAR MYSTERY VISITOR



The astronomy world has been abuzz recently with the discovery of a new object cutting through our solar system. Its path indicates it came from interstellar space, the first body of its kind ever observed. When it was first discovered, astronomers thought this object was a comet and gave it the name C/2017 U1, but further observations revealed the fast-moving object did not have a tail of dust and gas as comets do. Instead, its image was seen as slightly extended due to its rapid motion across the sky. Within hours of the discovery being announced in the early morning of Oct. 25, the world's astronomers began to train their facilities on this unusual object. I'm an astronomer with the National Research Council of Canada, a leader of the Outer Solar System Origins Survey (OSSOS) and member of the Colours for OSSOS (ColOSSOS) project that is measuring the surface colours of Kuiper belt objects discovered in OSSOS. The ColOSSOS team immediately began observing this unusual visitor.

The initial discovery announcement includes information from 10 observatories, each with its own team of astronomers. These observatories would have been privately alerted to the existence of this unusual detection and asked to provide confirming observations. This is a common practice to avoid a false announcement of an object's discovery when the orbit is significantly different than expectations. The International Astronomical Union designated the the object A/2017 U1. It's not the most romantic name conceivable but fascinating nonetheless. The name A/2017 U1 is a code describing the object. A for asteroid, followed by the year, bi-weekly period U (astronomers break the year into 26 two-week periods) and the number 1 to indicate this is the first object in this class in 2017. In reality, however, this is the first-ever known interstellar asteroid that humans have directly observed.

More details of the properties of this visitor will be analyzed in the coming days. The ColOSSOS group obtained observations of the object with the Gemini eight-metre telescope in Hawaii. Details of those observations, along with those from other groups, will soon be published on arxiv.org.

[Read More on The Conversation](#)



3 WAYS TO LINK GIRLS' EDUCATION ACTORS TO CLIMATE ACTION



Recent incidents of severe weather and flooding in Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, the United States, and the Caribbean are once again heightening anxiety about climate change. What is the human impact on climate change, and what are the most effective policies and programs for mitigating this impact? *Three Platforms for Girls' Education in Climate Strategies*, shows that educating girls is one of the most effective but overlooked ways to mitigate against climate change, and present three platforms on which actors can be a part of this pursuit.

Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities by affecting the most vulnerable and least skilled people, largely women and girls, most acutely. For example, girls are at greater risk of early marriage in times of weather-related crises, because their dowries can help ease the burden of scarce household resources. Girls are often also the first to be withdrawn from school or attend school less frequently during times of drought so that they can complete household responsibilities like fetching water. Despite this, researchers are beginning to acknowledge the powerful role that investments in girls' education can play in climate change adaptation and mitigation. This study suggests that for every additional year of schooling a girl receives on average, her country's resilience to climate disasters can be expected to improve by 3.2 points (as measured by the ND-GAIN Index, which calculates a country's vulnerability to climate change in relation to its resilience).

Achieving gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals requires multi-sectoral action, however, climate change strategies pursued by gender, education, and climate actors have remained largely confined to the sectors from which they stem. To address this gap, we lay out three specific platforms on which actors in these sectors can collaborate and support girls as agents of change in the pursuit of sustainable development and equitable climate action.

1. Promote girls' reproductive rights
2. Invest in girls' education to foster climate participation and leadership
3. Develop girls' life skills for a green economy

[Read More on Brookings](#)



Anonymous for the Voiceless
Protesting For Truth in Animal Exploitation
Ryerson University, Toronto
November 14, 2017

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