



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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100% RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY WORLDWIDE IS A NEW COST-EFFECTIVE REALITY

Last year Costa Rica beat its own record. The Central American country has run 300 days on electricity generated solely from renewable energy. Following the steps of Norway and Iceland, Costa Rica is about to showcase to the world how an emerging country can succeed in transitioning to a fossil-free electricity system. Renewable energy is increasingly a success story in emerging and developing markets. China added around 54 GW solar PV capacity in 2017—three times more than any other country has ever done, which tops China's total amount to 120 GW of solar PV installed capacity. India is catching up too. According to financial analysts, by 2020 renewables will have become the cheapest form of power generation.

[Read more on Medium.](#)



Credit: Andreas Guckhorn

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VIOLENCE ON THE FRONT LINE: ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE IN 2017

This is the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition's fifth global report on attacks on health workers and facilities, patients and ambulances. In those five years, the protection of health care in conflict has moved from the fringes of international concern to a key element of the global health agenda. The UN General Assembly and Security Council have affirmed and reinforced the norm of the immunity of health care from violence in war. WHO developed and, in early 2018, initiated a global system to collect and disseminate data on attacks on health care, and documentation by nongovernmental organizations has expanded. This report reflects greater access to information about attacks, though considerable under-reporting persists.

[Read more on Safe Guarding Health.](#)



**VIOLENCE ON THE FRONT LINE:
Attacks on Health Care in 2017**



MOZAMBIQUE PRAYS FOR RAIN AS WATER SHORTAGES HIT COUNTRY'S POOR

In a Maputo township a network of household taps made the community water pump obsolete years ago, freeing residents from the daily burden of lugging massive jerrycans of water long distances. But a water crisis, partly caused by an ongoing drought affecting much of southern Africa, is already reversing progress in this coastal city. An emergency "orange alert" was declared last February after rains failed, triggering such strict water rationing across the capital city that the taps are turned off every other day and irrigation is banned.

[Read more on The Guardian.](#)

Credit: The African Stand

LAKE CHAD: CAN THE VANISHING LAKE BE SAVED?

Lake Chad - a source of water to millions of people in West Africa - has shrunk by nine-tenths due to climate change, population growth and irrigation. But can a scheme dating back to the 1980s save it? "It's a ridiculous plan and it will never happen." That's the reaction many people have to the idea of trying to fill up Lake Chad and restore it to its former ocean-like glory by diverting water from the Congo river system 2,400km (1,500 miles) away. Sceptics in Nigeria, who have seen successive governments fail even to make the lights work, wonder if the region's politicians have nodded off and have been dreaming a little too hard. But the government ministers and engineers have good reason to be thinking outside the box. [Read more on BBC.](#)



Credit: Getty Images

UK GOVERNMENT UNVEILS PLANS FOR BUSINESS-BACKED PLASTICS INNOVATION HUB

The UK government plans to bring together businesses and research bodies from around the world to help tackle the scourge of marine plastic pollution. It is already working with the governments of Canada, India and a number of other Commonwealth countries to launch a new £50m Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework designed to help experts "develop solutions to stop plastic waste from entering our oceans and find environmentally-friendly alternatives to plastic". An international steering board will oversee the work of the new group, but the UK is hoping to play a central role following Prime Minister Theresa May's confirmation at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London that the government would provide up to £25m of funding which would help to encourage co-operation between the public and private sector. [Read more on Business Green.](#)





NIPAH VIRUS LATEST: DEATH OF NURSE TAKES TOLL FROM DEADLY DISEASE TO 10 IN SOUTHERN INDIA

At least 10 people have now died in southern India from confirmed cases of the deadly Nipah virus. Dozens more have been quarantined amid public panic in the state of Kerala, and a team of experts has been dispatched to the coastal region from India's National Centre for Disease Control in New Delhi. Dr. Henk Bekedam, the WHO Representative to India, praised the authorities for their "quick response to the situation". At a news conference on Tuesday, Kerala's health minister said that of 18 people screened for the virus 12 had tested positive and 10 had died. A nurse who treated suspected Nipah patients at a hospital in Perambra was named as the tenth victim.

[Read more on Independent](#)

Credit: Getty Images

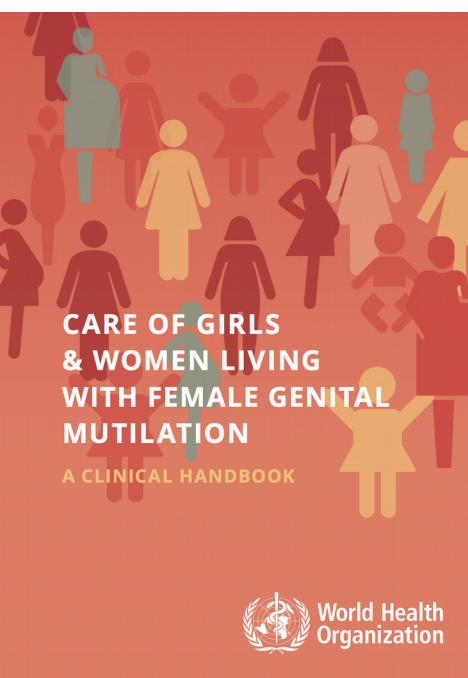
LABORATORY MEDICINE IN LOW-INCOME AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Laboratory medicine is essential for disease detection, surveillance, control and management. However, access to quality-assured laboratory diagnosis has been a challenge in low-income and middle-income countries resulting in delayed or inaccurate diagnosis and ineffective treatment with consequences for patient safety. In the new Lancet Series on pathology and laboratory medicine in LMICs, Michael Wilson and colleagues provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and gaps that limit access to these services.

[Read more on The Lancet.](#)



Credit: Miriam Schneidman



WHO UPDATES THEIR FGM WORK

Girls and women who have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) need high quality, empathetic and appropriate health care to meet their specific needs. WHO has launched a new clinical handbook to help health care workers provide such care. FGM is recognized internationally as a grave violation of girls' and women's human rights. It comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM has no medical justification, causes only harm, and must never be carried out. Health care providers must never subject girls and women to FGM, and those who do are violating the human rights of the girls and women in their care. [Read more on WHO.](#) See also: [The Girl Generation.](#)



SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE, IS MAKING A BANNED CHEMICAL THAT DESTROYS THE OZONE LAYER

Emissions of a banned, ozone-depleting chemical are on the rise, suggesting someone may be secretly manufacturing the pollutant in violation of an international accord. Emissions of CFC-11 have climbed 2 percent since 2012, despite the chemical being part of a group of ozone pollutants that were phased out under the 1987 Montreal Protocol. "I've been making these measurements for more than 30 years, and this is the most surprising thing I've seen," said Stephen Montzka, the scientist with NOAA who led the work. "I was astounded by it, really." It's a distressing result amid what is widely seen as a global environmental success story, which nations — alarmed by a growing "ozone hole" — collectively took action to phase out chlorofluorocarbons.

[Read more on The Washington Post.](#)

Credit: Alyss

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY: WELSH FIRST HOME BUYERS CAN BORROW MORE FOR ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES

Wales has become one of the first countries in the world to tie home energy performance to its loan terms, with the government announcing that energy efficiency would be factored into loan affordability calculations for its shared equity loan scheme. "From this June, the Help to Buy-Wales equity loan affordability calculator will include an energy efficiency element," the Housing and Regeneration minister said. "A more energy efficient home costs less in bills, so buyers will potentially be able to afford to borrow more. We want to make energy efficiency part of the consideration when people look to buy a home in Wales." It is hoped the changes will increase the market appetite for energy efficient new buildings and retrofits amongst lenders and buyers, home sellers and builders. [Read more on the Fifth Estate.](#)



Credit: Vince Talotta

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH: ONTARIO COURT DENIES INDIGENOUS ECUADORIANS REDRESS AGAINST CHEVRON CANADA FOR POLLUTION OF LAND

Indigenous people from Ecuador who have been living for decades on land poisoned by oil companies have had their appeal for redress against Chevron Canada rejected. An Ontario Appeals Court ruled Wednesday that Chevron Canada cannot be held responsible for the toxic pollution left behind in the Amazon rainforest by Texaco in the 1970s and 80s, before it was bought by Chevron. Chevron Canada is 100-per cent owned by U.S.-based Chevron Corporation via a chain of seven subsidiaries. The Indigenous peoples' lawyer argued that the companies actually operate as a single entity and had sought to have a \$9.5-billion Ecuadorian Supreme Court ruling against Chevron Corp. enforced against Chevron Canada.

[Read more on The Star.](#)

Credit: Andrew Francis Wallis

"Continued oil and gas extraction in California – both on land and offshore – and its imports of Amazon crude is a significant obstacle to doing what science says must be done to prevent the worst outcomes from climate change: keeping fossil fuels in the ground," said Leila Salazar-López, Amazon Watch Executive Director.

<https://www.dailkos.com/stories/2018/5/18/1765200/-Indigenous-leaders-from-Amazon-and-allies-call-on-CA-to-phase-out-oil-production-processing?detail=emaildkre>

EVENTSTABLE

June	McGill University Summer Institutes in Infectious Diseases and Global Health	Montreal Canada	http://mcgill-idgh.ca/courses/tuberculosis-research-methods/
June 13-14	Joint Symposium on Global Health and Care, Department of Sociology, UofT	Toronto Canada	http://sociology.utoronto.ca/events-2-2/joint-symposium-on-global-health-and-care/
June 22-24	Annual Conference, The Council of Canadians	Ottawa Canada	https://canadians.org/conference
Oct 8-12	5th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research	Liverpool England	http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2018/
Nov 15-19	4th People's Health Assembly	Dhaka Bangladesh	http://www.phmovement.org/en/node/10805



SPECIAL EDITION OF *WATER INTERNATIONAL* – CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTIVE WATER MANAGEMENT: INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

FYI

Water INTERNATIONAL



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Water International Journal (Vol. 43,
Issue 4) – May 2018

Climate change is one of the most pressing threats to sustainable development across the globe. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes that 93% of the impacts associated with climate change will be felt in the water sector. Climate change is already altering precipitation patterns and snowmelt, impacting the frequency and magnitude of floods and droughts, and contributing to more extreme weather events and wildfires globally. Availability of renewable surface and groundwater resources is likely to decrease significantly in most arid and semi-arid subtropical regions, exacerbating competition for water between agriculture, ecosystems, industry and settlements. Climate change is projected to lower raw and drinking water quality, due to interacting factors including increased sediment and pollutant loads due to heavy rainfall and breakdown of water treatment infrastructure during floods and extreme weather events.

Read more on Taylor & Francis Online.

WARNING SIGNALS ABOUT PESTICIDES AND BIRDS IN CANADA

FYI



Credit: TomorrowsWorld

Christy Morrissey wasn't shocked when her research revealed two commonly used insecticides are harmful to songbirds. Insecticides, after all, are toxic substances—or, as the University of Saskatchewan biology professor refers to them, “the only legal poison that you can coat the environment with.” What did surprise her was just how harmful the insecticides turned out to be, even when consumed by migratory birds in very small doses. Her study with postdoctoral fellow Margaret Eng demonstrated that low and intermediate doses of the chemicals—called neonicotinoids and organophosphates—were extremely toxic to white crowned sparrows, causing them to lose up to 25 per cent of their body mass in just three days. [Read more on College of Arts and Science.](#)



THE WORLD WANTS AIR-CONDITIONING - THAT COULD WARM THE WORLD



Credit: HugoHD

More than crickets and fireflies, more than baseball and cookouts, perhaps nothing signals the arrival of summer in many countries like the soft familiar whir of air-conditioning. But there is growing concern that as other countries adopt America's love of air-conditioners, the electricity used to power them will overburden electrical grids and increase planet-warming emissions. The number of air-conditioners worldwide is predicted to soar from 1.6 billion units today to 5.6 billion units by midcentury, according to the International Energy Agency. If left unchecked, by 2050 air-conditioners would use as much electricity as China does for all activities today.

Read more on [The New York Times](#).



GERMANY IS A CLEAN ENERGY SUPERPOWER – AND HERE'S THE PROOF



Credit: CleanTechnica

Over the past three decades, Germany has cemented its role as a trendsetter for clean energy. Most people know Germany for things like its popular car manufacturers Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, and its annual Oktoberfest and all those brilliant composers (Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann, anyone?). But did you know the country is also a clean-energy superpower? Indeed, Germany was one of the first major economies to take significant steps to transition from nuclear and fossil fuels to clean energy, beginning in the 1990s. This transition was known as “Energiewende” (or “energy transition”), and its success is a major reason why Germans have come to embrace the many benefits of clean energy.

Read more on Climate Reality Project.



RESEARCHERS QUESTION CONSERVATION COMMUNITY'S ACCEPTANCE OF TROPHY HUNTING



Credit: Seymour / Fotolia

Researchers at Oregon State University are challenging the premise that trophy hunting is an acceptable and effective tool for wildlife conservation and community development. They argue that charging hunters to kill animals and claim body parts should be a last resort rather than a fallback plan. In a paper published in *Conservation Letters*, the researchers label the practice as morally inappropriate and say alternative strategies such as ecotourism should be fully explored and ruled out before trophy hunting is broadly endorsed. "Trophies are body parts," said lead author Chelsea Batavia, a Ph.D. student in OSU's College of Forestry. "But...at this point it seems to have become so normalized, no one really stops to think about what trophy hunting actually entails." [Read more on Science Daily.](#)



SOWING THE SEEDS OF STORYTELLING IN SOUTHERN INDIA



Credit: Sivangana Vasudeva

I am writing this blogpost from Bangalore, where I have spent the last few days participating in a networking workshop on past and present sustainable farming practices. I know very little about sustainable farming practices – I know a little more now than I did at the beginning of the week – but I have been here to talk about storytelling and how it might be used to unlock lay and traditional knowledge and bring new voices into discussions around policy and practice. The event, made possible by a Global Challenges Research Fund grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, was jointly hosted by the Open University and the Green Foundation, a NGO based in Bangalore that works with farmers (and women in particular) to support the transition to more sustainable and organic forms of crop production. There were also presentations and discussion around participatory film-making, theatre for development, and oral history. [Read more on UK CDS.](#)



Creatively Battling Social
Grievances
A Tribe Called Red
CBC Music Festival, Toronto
May 26, 2018
Credit: David Zakus

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