



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

November 29, 2018 planetaryhealthweekly.com Volume 4, Number 48

BIG OIL VS. THE PLANET IS THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES

Oil and gas corporations dumped millions of dollars into the 2018 US elections and successfully defeated major initiatives that could have slightly reduced fossil fuel use. Will those who truly care about the survival of humanity muster the discipline to occasionally look away from the Washington DC garbage fire and focus more activism on the state and local level? Will a media that obsesses over Trump's tweets find the will to more diligently cover a climate crisis that threatens the planet? Will our political class behold the fossil fuel industry's sociopathy and realize that we face an existential choice between profits and ecological survival? In short, will we as a society finally start treating this emergency as an actual emergency?

[Read More at The Guardian](#)



Credit: Mr Offshore

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

The Last Stand Of The Last Great Wilderness	
The Rhine Of Germany Is Crippled By Drought	
River Of Ice In Iraq	2

2017 Global Burden Of Disease Study	
Ugandan Communities A Border Away From Ebola	
A Day Needed To Raise Awareness Around Toilets	3

Ethiopia's New Cabinet Is A Historic Win For Women	
Role Of Epidemiology In Firearm Violence Prevention	
Celebrate Indigenous History At Thanksgiving	4

Quote Of The Week On Disasters & Events	5

FYI#1: Logging Scars Trip Report And Project	6

FYI#2: Tanzanian Appointed For U.N. Environment	7

FYI#3: Projects & Solutions For Regenerative Futures	8

FYI#4: Engaging With The Private Sector For UHC	9

FYI#5: Young Afghan Women Reach New Heights Trekking In Nepal	10

FYI#6: Indigenization At The Heart Of Strategic Planning	11

Back page: Forest Wonder Ski

MELANOMA DEATH RATES ARE RISING IN MEN BUT STATIC OR FALLING IN WOMEN

The rate of men dying from malignant melanoma has risen in populations around the world, while in some countries the rates are steady or falling for women, according to new research presented at the 2018 NCRI Cancer Conference. The researchers studied age-standardised death rates in 33 countries between 1985 and 2015. They extracted the rates for malignant melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer. They compared the rates for men and women and looked at trends over time. Israel and the Czech Republic experienced the largest decreases in mortality rates in women, 23.4% and 15.5% respectively. Dr Yang, a junior doctor at the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, UK, says she and her colleagues will continue to examine the data to help explain the differences.

[Read More at Science Daily](#)



Credit: Kali Nine LLC/Getty Images





Credit: Kiliü Yüyan

THE LAST STAND OF THE LAST GREAT WILDERNESS

Though the Arctic may be far from factories and traffic jams and other major sources of carbon pollution, human-driven climate change is warming it faster—as much as two times faster—than anywhere else on Earth. When it comes to the planetary-scale transformations of climate change, isolation doesn't exist. Not even here. It's strange to move through a landscape that is both timeless and running out of time. The future of the refuge is still the mystery it has always been. The faraway politics, our ideals about wilderness, and the prices of oil and possibly carbon are all in flux. Environmental groups and Alaska Natives like the Gwich'in have vowed to fight drilling in any way they can, but they are on the defensive as never before.

[Read More at Sierra Club](#)

THE RHINE, A LIFELINE OF GERMANY, IS CRIPPLED BY DROUGHT

One of the longest dry spells on record has left parts of the Rhine at record-low levels for months, forcing freighters to reduce their cargo or stop plying the river altogether. A trade group in Germany put farmers' losses at several billion dollars. The German chemical giant BASF had to decrease production at one of its plants over the summer because the Rhine, whose water it uses to cool production, was too low. About half of Germany's river ferries have stopped running, according to the Federal Waterways and Shipping Administration, and river cruise ships are having to transport their passengers by bus for parts of their journey. Thousands of fish in the Swiss section of the river died because of the heat and low oxygen levels. "Low water events will be more frequent," said Mr. Douglas of the Federal Environment Agency, "and at the same time the Rhine fleet is becoming bigger and heavier."

[Read More at New York Times](#)



Credit: Gordon Welters/NY Times



Credit: Weather Nation

RIVER OF ICE IN IRAQ

Iraq is known for its hot, dry summers and short, cool winters but not this year as it was hit by a torrential rain and ice storm which led to melt down in the war-torn country. This incredible footage shows the extent of an unprecedented weather pattern that's caused chaos in the Middle East. A frozen river of ice water is seen raging through the desert as these Iraqi men watch on in disbelief. The region - renowned for its arid climate - has been hit by ice storms, strong winds and heavy rain in recent days leading to a state of emergency.

See short video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pguu_eBsNWk



2017 GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE STUDY, NCDS

Yet another study finds most nations will not reach SDG 3.4. The 2017 global burden of disease study corroborates the headline of NCD countdown 2030 that most nations will fail to meet SDG target 3.4 to reduce deaths due to NCDs. Covering 195 countries, the study was carried out by the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation and published in *The Lancet*. The study also concludes that there is less than a 9% chance of any country eliminating childhood overweight in children aged 2-4 years; meaning that unless current trends are altered it will be impossible for even a single country to achieve SDG target 2.2 to end all forms of malnutrition. The study finds that ischaemic heart disease, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) all caused more than 1 million deaths worldwide in 2017. Key risk factors for NCDs are responsible for an increased share of global disability compared to 1990 include high blood pressure, smoking, high blood sugar, and high body-mass index (BMI). Overall, males are more likely to die than females from an NCD. [Read More at The Lancet](#)

Credit: Think Global

THE UGANDAN COMMUNITIES A BORDER AWAY FROM EBOLA

While Ebola virus within DRC's borders raises concerns for surrounding countries including Uganda, the closest of DRC's neighbours to the epicenter of the outbreak in the northeastern town of Beni. Still, public health professionals on the ground in Uganda say the situation remains calm. The health minister believes the country has everything it needs for now, with partners filling in where there are gaps. "I think we've done our best [to prepare for Ebola], but of course we cannot say for sure that our best is the best until it is tested," said Jane Aceng, Minister of Health. Some of the most common questions raised are on protection and survival, reflecting people's anxiety over Ebola, a disease with an average fatality rate of 50 percent, according to WHO. People want to know what treatment is available, and if Ebola centers really help. [Read More at Devex](#)

See Also on Devex: [South Sudan, Rwanda ramp up Ebola prevention efforts](#)



Credit: Hribisko/CC BY-NC-SA



WHY WE NEED A DAY TO RAISE AWARENESS AROUND TOILETS

For many of us, World Toilet Day might seem like an odd day. Why do we need a day to raise awareness of the toilet? Being able to use a toilet whenever we like, wherever we like is something we rarely give a second thought. One in three people around the world don't have access to a toilet. That's one third of the population — or 2.3 billion people. Today, in 2018. Not having access to a toilet isn't just inconvenient — it can have a devastating impact on people's lives. It can create barriers to children's education as they spend hours each day finding a place to go, time that could otherwise be spent at school. And then there's the issue of sanitation: every two minutes a child dies from a water and sanitation-related illness, often due to water contaminated by human waste. [Read More at Global Citizen](#)

Credit: Patricia Esteve/UN



ETHIOPIA'S NEW CABINET IS A HISTORIC WIN FOR WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

One African country has recognized the need for equal gender representation within its government. “Our women ministers will disprove the old adage that women can’t lead,” said Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. According to Abiy, this decision is the first of its kind in the history of Ethiopia and probably in Africa. He chose to appoint women to his cabinet because they are less “corrupt” than men, have proved to restore peace and stability, and can help move the country forward. The country is trying to shake its patriarchal past. Women have held roles within the Ethiopian cabinet before, but they were not high-level positions, according to the [Washington Post](#). The country also announced Aisha Mohammed Musa as its first-ever female defense minister, while Muferiat Kamil will be tasked with mitigating violent ethnic tensions within the country as head of the new Ministry of Peace, according to AP. [Read More at Global Citizen](#)

Credit: STRINGER/AFP/Getty Images

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY:

THE ROLE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY IN FIREARM VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Firearm violence has reached pandemic levels, with some countries experiencing high injury and death rates from privately owned guns and firearms (hereinafter collectively referred to as ‘firearms’). Significant factors in the increase in deaths and injuries from privately held firearms include the ease of obtaining these arms and, most importantly, the growing lethality of these weapons. Society cannot be satisfied with reactive responses only in treating victims’ physical and psychological wounds after these occurrences; more must be done proactively to prevent firearm violence and address societal circumstances that either facilitate or impede it. Where they exist, well-intended policies fail to adequately protect people from firearm violence. Research into these global differences in firearm homicide rates could shed light on the underlying determinants of firearm violence. [Read More at Oxford Academic](#)



Credit: UNEC/SOCODEVI



SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS:

CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS HISTORY AT THANKSGIVING

So how to observe the holiday in ways that support Indigenous communities, that acknowledge the tribal land rights and sovereign agency of Indigenous nations? To start, it’s crucial to learn the true, ugly story of that fateful gathering in 1621. The modern Thanksgiving celebration doesn’t have to memorialize a history of colonial genocide. It can present a learning opportunity, and moreover, an opportunity to act on behalf of the Indigenous communities whose sovereignty remains challenged today. “One way to take accountability for settler colonialism is to practice land acknowledgment,” suggests Jade Begay, a filmmaker of Diné and Tesuque Pueblo heritage and campaign director at [For the Wild](#), an ecological Indigenous storytelling collective. A perhaps more proactive way of honouring the sacrifices of tribal communities is to actively support Indigenous groups in defending their land. [Read More at Sierra Club](#)

Credit: Neal Hamberg/Associated Press



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Peter Walton, International Director,
Australian Red Cross:

“Globally, the cost of damage caused by disasters in 2017 was a staggering \$472 billion. Yet research shows that every dollar spent on reducing risks saves up to \$8 when disasters strike.”

[Read More at Red Cross](#)

Credit: Australian Red Cross

EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Nov. 29th	Revisiting Primary Health Care and Alma Ata in SDG Era	Toronto Canada	http://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/event/revisiting-primary-health-care-and-alma-ata-in-the-sdg-era/
Mar. 8th-10th	10th Annual CUGH Conference—Translation and Implementation for Impact in Global Health	Chicago USA	https://www.cugh.org/events/2019-annual-cugh-global-health-conference
Mar. 20th -22nd	2019 Climate Leadership Conference and Awards	Baltimore USA	https://www.climateleadershipconference.org/
Apr. 30th- May 2nd	Public Health 2019 (CPHA)	Ottawa Canada	https://www.cpha.ca/public-health-2019-program
May 13th - 15th	Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CSEB): 2019 Biennial Conference	Ottawa Canada	https://cseb.ca/conferences/2019-conference/



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SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA: LOGGING SCARS TRIP REPORT AND PROJECT PREVIEW



Credit: facebook.com / Uniates Save

This summer I drove, biked and hiked thousands of kilometres of dusty logging roads in northwestern Ontario, camping in the heart of Canada's boreal forest. I was there to visit old clearcuts – areas of forest where industrial logging has occurred. With my work, I spend a lot of time poring over satellite images, and out the windows of small planes flying over this vast boreal landscape. It's a carbon-rich blanket of sturdy coniferous-dominated forest, truly a globally significant treasure.

But, a peculiar pattern continues to stare back at me. It is a startling pattern of... logging scars. So? We probably can't extract resources without leaving some mark. And, we are assured by our logging industry and their regulators that trees logged here are entirely renewed. So, are these scars just an interesting signature in the forest? I didn't think so, and I had to find out.

[Read More at Wildlands League](#)



TANZANIAN APPOINTED TO HEAD U.N. ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



Credit: Swahilivilla blogspot

Tanzania's Joyce Msuya has been appointed to head the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in acting capacity, following the resignation of its executive director, Erik Solheim. Msuya was appointed to the global organisation as the deputy executive director, at the level of assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, in August this year. She previously worked with the World Bank and is consistently advocating for conservation of the planet.

Solheim resigned his position at UNEP, following an internal audit report that said he had gobbled up \$500,000 in unnecessary and budgeted travel expenses in just 22 months. "I am sad to be leaving UNEP as we have achieved so much together. I will continue to champion the cause of the environment," he tweeted. Solheim resigned his position at UNEP, following an internal audit report that said he had gobbled up \$500,000 in unnecessary and budgeted travel expenses in just 22 months. The Norwegian diplomat and former politician became executive director of UNEP in 2016.

[Read More at Africa News](#)



PROJECTS AND SOLUTIONS FOR REGENERATIVE FUTURES



Credit: Flickr/sj lieuw; Allan Lee; Calle v H.

GEN communities are pioneering ways to live into the dimensions of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability through whole systems design. In living laboratories of climate resilience, ecovillages are pioneering solutions in all dimensions of sustainability that can be shared and easily replicated around the world. The 2018 Hildur Jackson Extraordinary Project winner Nashira Ecovillage, in Colombia, offers the example of a matriarchal community where almost 90 people have created a community based on solidarity, mutual support and care for the natural environment. They are opening their community to visitors to demonstrate organic gardening, traditional cooking, and collective decision-making processes and also generate sustainable income.

Similarly, Kibbutz Lotan in Israel is empowering individuals to engage in action towards environmental sustainability through training in their Center for Creative Ecology, instilling a sense of wonder for nature and building collective resilience. In Denmark, social ecology and integration are explored to ensure that those with special needs can become fully integrated into community. All of the examples are focused on whole systems design for community resilience, rather than simply living off grid or focusing on a single aspect of sustainability. [Read More at Global EcoVillage Network](#)



ENGAGING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR UHC: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED



Credit: Health Systems Global

In many countries, the development of pluralistic health systems was a response to the absence of a clear policy framework. This resulted in highly fragmented systems, which provide services of varying quality. This is an important research priority: to identify approaches for accelerating the emergence of technological innovations and for integrating these innovations into new kinds of partnerships for health service delivery and to identify emergent problems that governments need to address through strengthening regulation. Discussions identified a number of factors that governments need to do:

- ensure that governments and health insurance schemes have the capacity to function as effective purchasers of services;
- take into account local realities and the complex markets that exist in both rural areas and rapidly changing urban localities;
- make sure that the experiences of users of health services are taken into account in overseeing health system development;
- establish an effective regulatory regime appropriate to the changing realities and avoid capture by powerful interest groups.

[Read More at Health Systems Global](#)





A GROUP OF YOUNG AFGHAN WOMEN REACH NEW HEIGHTS TREKKING IN NEPAL



Credit: Crystalsaline Randazzo

For the past two and a half years, Mariam, Shogufa and Neki have taken part in Ascend: Leadership Through Athletics, a program in Kabul that trains Afghan girls to climb mountains. Danika Gilbert, the program's expedition leader, organized this trip to Nepal and is leading us on a 15-day trek. Social customs also narrow the opportunities available to the three. In Afghanistan, more than one-third of girls are married by the age of 18. As they get older, Shogufa, Mariam and Neki feel increasing pressure to marry, which would likely put an end to their mountain climbing. (The three tell me they prefer to be called "girls"; to them, "women" means that the door to new possibilities has closed.)

The girls have so little control over their lives. What if by taking them out to the mountains, she is just giving them a taste of something that in the long run they cannot have? For better or worse, being in Nepal has opened the girls' eyes to a new world. They are surprised by all the different people who come to Nepal to trek. Not just the combination of nationalities, but also the mix of young people, old people, some with friends, some with their families.

[Read More at Sierra Club](#)



PUTTING INDIGENIZATION AT THE HEART OF STRATEGIC PLANNING



Credit: Viviega

In recent years, a growing number of post-secondary institutions from across Canada have been implementing new strategies and initiatives with a goal to Indigenize their campuses. But what does it mean to Indigenize, and beyond that, how does an institution know if it's succeeding? For University of Saskatchewan President Peter Stoicheff, the ability to answer these questions lies in the hands of Indigenous communities. "We will know that we have made headway when Elders, when Indigenous students, when Indigenous leaders and Indigenous communities are telling us that we are," said Stoicheff after the recent release of USask's new seven-year plan, which places Indigenization at the top of its list of priorities.

The plan is entitled *The University the World Needs*, and has been gifted the Indigenous names of *nīkānītān manācihitowinihk* (Cree) and *ni manachīhitoonaan* (Michif), which translate to "Let us lead with respect." Building on its commitment to Indigenization, the new USask plan pursues three core values, which are courageous curiosity, boundless collaboration, and inspired communities. [Read More at Academia Forum](#)





Credit: David Zakus

Forest Wonder Ski
Seguin, Ontario
November 27, 2018

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