



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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INSIDE CHINA'S EXPERIMENT TO FIND FRIENDS FOR 230 MILLION OLD PEOPLE

The privately-owned Long Shan Nursing Home is one of a few dozen early testing sites for caregiving robots in China. The home has been experimenting with three robots since August 2016. Doctors and nurses use two smaller robots, a bit like person-shaped rolling smartphones. They can track blood pressure and other basic health data, but also help residents video chat with their family or look at photos. The third robot is something completely different: a pink and white child-sized bot whose sole purpose is to keep residents company. Care bots are part of a big bet China's making on robots. The country is already the world's largest producer of industrial robots and the largest buyer of robots in the world. The government is also focused on developing service robots, and has laid out a plan to turn it into a 30 billion yuan industry (\$4.35 billion) by 2020. A big part of that will be caregiving and companion robots for the elderly.

[Read More on Quartz](#)



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100,000 PAGES OF CHEMICAL INDUSTRY SECRETS GATHERED DUST IN AN OREGON BARN FOR DECADES, UNTIL NOW

For decades, some of the dirtiest, darkest secrets of the chemical industry have been kept in Carol Van Strum's barn. Creaky, damp, and prowled by the occasional black bear, the listing, 80 year old structure in rural Oregon housed more than 100,000 pages of documents obtained through legal discovery in lawsuits against Dow, Monsanto, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S., Forest Service, the Air Force, and pulp and paper companies, among others. As of today, those documents and others that have been collected by environmental activists will be publicly available through a project called the Poison Papers. Together, the library contains more than 200,000 pages of information and "lays out a 40-year history of deceit and collusion involving the chemical industry and the regulatory agencies that were supposed to be protecting human health and the environment," said Peter von Stackelberg, a journalist who along with the Center for Media and Democracy and the Bioscience Resource Project helped put the collection online.

[Read More on The Intercept](#)





WHO Readies to Launch Online Database Tracking Attacks Against Health Workers

A new, interactive database built by the World Health Organization will soon shine a spotlight on the extent of violence against health care workers and the risks they are facing in some of the world's toughest places to deliver aid. The online database, set to launch within the next few months, will track possible, probable and confirmed attacks in real time, which any public user can search and sort by country or type of attack. It's a "starting point," which could lead to a reduction in future violence altogether, said Erin Maura Kenney, the acting chief of staff for the WHO's emergency director, who is overseeing the database's construction. "It is an awareness building exercise as well, and we think people will be more likely to report attacks if they see the type of attacks that are being reported through the system, they may say, 'Wow we did not think that was an attack on health care,'" she added.

[Read More on Devex](#)

Innovative Maternal Health Interventions Reduce Mortality in Ethiopia

Ethiopian maternal health researcher Hagos Godefay at Umeå University in Sweden has created a locally feasible method to estimate maternal mortality rates with a bottom-up measurement approach. Providing insights into the effectiveness of local interventions to reduce maternal mortality, the approach will be important for health sector planning and decision-making on local, regional and state levels. Hagos Godefay at the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, Epidemiology and Global Health Unit has researched current efforts to reduce maternal mortality in the Tigray Region of northern Ethiopia. He has set out to quantify overall mortality levels, identify specific causes and evaluate local interventions. By using methods that can also be scaled at national level, Hagos Godefay's results provide a strong empirical basis for decision-making by the Tigray Regional Health Bureau. "We see encouraging results of improved reproductive health and reduced pregnancy-related deaths in the Tigray region. A key reason for this has been the creation of small local women's groups of volunteers who act as ambassadors for the benefits of utilizing the existing health services," says Hagos Godefay.

[Read More on EurekAlert](#)

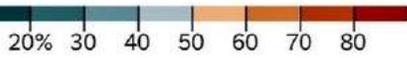


What a City in Spain Learned From Sweden About Promoting Local Food and Healthier Eating

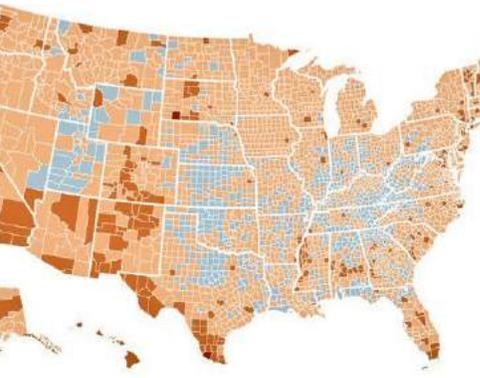
Mollet Del Valles, Spain is a city of 50,000 that has always had a tradition of eating well and protecting the land. But there was never a city-wide food policy linking producers and consumers. Then, a few years ago, City Hall set up an International Relations department, and officer Albert Garcia Macian learned what was happening in a Swedish city some 1,600 miles away. The city of Södertälje, close to Stockholm, had found a way to put local, organic and seasonal food on the plates of 24,000 public school students a day. The move had boosted local organic farming, cut the carbon footprint of the city's public canteens, and given kids healthier food to eat. How Garcia and the municipality of Mollet del Vallès set out to adapt Södertälje's "green diet" approach is a story of how innovative urban policies these days can travel quickly across borders, starting in the context of one city and changing to suit another. It's also a story of how even small cities can make big changes when they think creatively and share ideas. At that time, Södertälje, the "Good Practice city" leading a network called "Diet for a Green Planet", was seeking partners just like Mollet del Vallès.

[Read More on Citiscope](#)





Global warming will harm people in the United States



How Americans Think About Climate Change, in Six Maps

Americans overwhelmingly believe that global warming is happening, and that carbon emissions should be scaled back. But fewer are sure that the changes will harm them personally. Part of this is the problem of risk perception. In every congressional district, a majority of adults supports limiting carbon dioxide emissions from existing coal-fired power plants. But many Republicans in Congress (and some Democrats) agree with President Trump, who may move to kill an Obama administration plan that would have scaled back the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. Nationally, about seven in 10 Americans support regulating carbon pollution from coal fired power plants, and 75 percent support regulating CO2 as a pollutant more generally. But lawmakers are unlikely to change direction soon. Global warming is precisely the kind of threat humans are awful at dealing with: a problem with enormous consequences over the long term, but little that is sharply visible on a personal level in the short term. Humans are hard-wired for quick fight-or-flight reactions in the face of an imminent threat, but not highly motivated to act against slow-moving and somewhat abstract problems, even if the challenges that they pose are ultimately dire.

[Read More on New York Times](#)

Al Gore on the Climate Change Fight's New Challenges

An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power, which comes out Aug. 4, is a call to arms for those invested in the climate-change fight, a personal polemic from Gore that's less an education and more of an intervention. In an interview with *Maclean's*, the former U.S. vice president and the movie's Canadian executive producer, Jeff Skoll, spoke about the challenges in communicating the threat of climate change, what happens when potential solutions fail. This interview has been condensed and edited.

You spoke in the film about a personal crisis of faith, a feeling of despair that overtook you at one point in your fight. What happened, and how did you move past it?

AG: Well, anyone who deals with the climate crisis has an internal dialogue between hope and despair, because the challenge is so huge and the danger is so great and the stakes are so high. But I have always resolved that in favour of hope, and actually I'm more hopeful now than I was a decade ago when the solutions were visible on the horizon, but you had to seek reassurance that the technology experts that they're coming, they'll be here. But now they're here, and in many parts of the world, in North America, the electricity from solar and wind is much cheaper than electricity from fossil fuels, and now the batteries are coming down in price, which lets you use solar electricity at night and wind electricity in the day, and that's going to be a complete game-changer, worldwide.

[Read More on Macleans](#)



Solar Has Not Beaten Coal in the Race to Electrify India

Those ready to crown solar energy as the victor in the race to electrify India, attend. More efficient coal plants will hugely undercut renewable energy prices in the coming years, creating vast new demand for the most-polluting fossil fuel. International interest in Indian coal has been fierce ever since the realisation that the nation's reliance on coal-driven energy infrastructure and its unacceptable emissions would make nonsense of the international determination to bring greenhouse gas emissions under control. The target of avoiding 1.5C of mean global warming shall go awry unless India finds another, cleaner way to provide power to at least 500 million people who have zero to scant access to energy (304 million without any at all) in a developing country of 1.2 billion. Because of this, the plunging price of solar power and the news that India's electricity authority sees no need for new coal plants until at least 2027 has generated excited headlines. "India, Once a Coal Goliath, Is Fast Turning Green," said the *New York Times*. In an interview with *Climate Home*, the former chair of the state-owned coal monopoly Partha Bhattacharya, a serious thinker in the energy space, agreed that solar has emerged as a major competitor to those wanting to build new coal plants.

[Read More on Climate Home](#)



More Venezuelan Children Dying From Preventable Diseases Amid Crisis

Millions of Venezuelans are struggling with shortages and triple-digit inflation during political and economic upheaval that has triggered months of street protests where at least 75 people have been killed. Declining production of oil, a major export, has left the government increasingly short of cash, and lack of everything from food to medical equipment is hitting vulnerable groups like the elderly and children particularly hard. A dozen children have the same infection, which doctors traced back to dialysis machines that were improperly maintained due to lack of resources, according to Belén Arteaga, head of the hospital's kidney unit. Surveys conducted by Catholic non-profit organization Caritas in poor sectors of Venezuela's four most populous states found that 48 percent of children younger than 5 were malnourished. That figure had risen to 56 percent. Those at high risk of death from malnutrition increased to 11.4 percent of the sample from 8 percent in that time, the surveys showed. Many treatments at J.M. de los Rios are available only because of private donations.

[Read More on Reuters](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY: GRANTING EXCLUSIVE LICENSE FOR ZIKA VACCINE IS CAUSING CONCERN

Sanofi Pasteur could be granted an exclusive license to manufacture and sell a Zika vaccine produced by the U.S. Army, but the arrangement is causing concern for some state officials and nonprofit organizations. Many fear that such an agreement could lead to a vaccine that is priced out of the reach of those who need it. According to a report by National Public Radio, the U.S. Army is planning to grant an exclusive license to Sanofi Pasteur because of the high risk and high cost involved in advanced vaccine development. Opponents, however, point out that the U.S. government's contribution to producing the vaccine has already been significant and say that offering an exclusive license could have negative consequences to the United States. A formal appeal opposing the exclusive license was filed in May by Knowledge Ecology International; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; People of Faith for Access to Medicines, Social Security Works; Universities Allied for Essential Medicines; Public Citizen; and the economist Dean Baker.

[Read More on Drug Topics](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH: RESEARCH GRANT AT CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY WILL ASSIST PROBE INTO METHOD OF TRADITIONAL HEALING

Research into the traditional Mi'kmaq practice of using birch bark oil in the treatment of skin conditions has attracted \$150,000 in funding. Tuma Young, assistant professor of Mi'kmaq Studies, and Matthias Bierenstiel, associate professor of chemistry at CBU, have received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for the biomedical screening and Indigenous studies of birch bark oil in treating topical skin conditions such as dry skin, eczema and psoriasis. In an interview, Young said he was conducting research on traditional medicines when his mother mentioned to him an oil that her family used to use when her older sister had a bout of eczema. "They used it and it cured it and that allowed her to nurse her newborn baby," he said. The research grant supports a community liaison position assisting with interviews and a senior science research associate for the biomedical research. Several CBU bachelor of arts and science undergraduate students will assist with the research project.

[Read More on Cape Breton Post](#)



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The massive loss of populations and species reflects our lack of empathy to all the wild species that have been our companions since our origins... It is a prelude to the disappearance of many more species and the decline of natural systems that make civilization possible.”

Gerardo Ceballos, ecology professor at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Mexico City.

The Ceballos study “is right in raising alarm bells... especially with our change in climate... We really need to protect as much habitat as we can now. Our population continues to expand, our consumption continues to expand. We’re going in the wrong direction, quickly.”

Noah Greenwald, endangered species director for the Center for Biological Diversity in Arizona. [See Full Report on Washington Post](#)



EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Sept 25-27	Canadian Association of Community Health Centres 2017 Conference	Calgary Canada	https://www.cachc.ca/2017conference/?utm_source=CACHC+e-News&utm_campaign=95ef99308c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_06_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_78768ad041-95ef99308c-306041945
Sept 29	Governance of Pharmaceuticals Policy Workshop	Toronto Canada	http://www.pharmacy.utoronto.ca/whocc
Oct 29-31	Canadian Conference for Global Health	Montreal Canada	http://www.ccgh-csih.ca/ccgh2015/index



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RESOURCES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICERS



This *Facilitator's Guide* aims to assist trainers from diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to instructors from medical, social welfare, and public health departments; researchers; as well as gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against children (VAC) experts in monitoring and evaluation, HIV, and human rights programs, to facilitate GBV and VAC training for health care workers and social welfare officers on effective GBV and VAC prevention and response.

[View the Collection on US Aid](#)



AID WORKER SECURITY 1997-2016 AND KILLED AID WORKERS IN 2016

devex insight:

Aid worker security: 1997 to 2016

CHANGING
THREATS

INCIDENTS IN
DETAIL

ANALYSING
TRENDS

ABOUT

Year
2016

Incident type
Killed

Geographic distribution of incidents - Killed aid workers in 2016



This Devex Insights visualization presents information extracted from the Aid Worker security database (<https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents>) between 1997 and 2016.

The Aid Worker security database is project of Humanitarian Outcomes (<http://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/>).

The data was extracted on 18 May 2017 and is subject to changes made to the database after this time. For instructions on how to use this vizualization, hover over the information buttons.

[View Database on Dexex](#)



ANCIENT UNDERWATER FOREST FOUND IN THE UNITED STATES



An underwater forest found off the coast of Alabama could provide valuable insights into climate change and rising sea levels. The forest is the subject of a new documentary by environmental journalist Ben Raines.

[Watch the documentary on BBC](#)



GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK



The Global Ecovillage Network envisions a world of empowered citizens and communities, designing and implementing pathways to a regenerative future, while building bridges of hope and international solidarity.

Imagine a world living abundantly, while within its limits. A world that is regenerating rather than depleting the environment, and where cooperation and connection is rewarded. GEN aims to create such a world by spreading the physical and cultural technology of ecovillages. We invite you to get involved with this work! The GEN Consultancy seeks to share the world's best practices in the fields of community sustainability and resilience through a highly skilled and diverse network of expert consultants. In these times as we face great challenges, the sharing and transferring of expertise and grounded experience is crucial to the success of our endeavors to become a more sustainable species.

For the first time since the creation of GEN, Brazil will host a meeting to bring together the Council of Sustainable Settlements of Latin America (CASA LATINA) and GEN. A Visions Council will be held with diverse activists, permacultores, educators, and indigenous leaders from across the planet to discuss and plan PRACTICAL ACTIONS for bioregional and planetary resilience.

By becoming a Friend of GEN you will receive exclusive benefits to bring you closer to GEN's work on the ground and connect with communities worldwide. You will contribute to the regenerative paradigm and support communities who are implementing change now. Now more than ever we need to connect and stand together in solidarity for alternatives that are conducive to life.

[Read and Join on Ecovillage](#)



RENEWED SUPPORT FOR AFRICA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY



The European Investment Bank, together with the African Development Bank, launched a project that both had been crafting intensively for a few years. There was little in the way of fanfare, but over the next five to 10 years the results could set Africa and its young people down a new path to a sustainable and prosperous future.

The project, under the Boost Africa initiative that was agreed upon in 2016, calls for a joint investment in the TLcom Technology and Innovation for Developing Economies Africa Fund, a plan to offer venture capital and advice where it is needed the most: to 10-15 tech start-up companies run by young and female entrepreneurs who are creating African solutions to African problems. These young people represent one of the biggest bright spots for the future of Africa and they are part of its rising digital economy, which is why we at the EIB and Afrika-Verein der deutschen Wirtschaft, alongside the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, are calling for more support for them.

It is crucial to support more and more of these startup companies and digital initiatives that are riding the wave of Africa's increasingly prevalent mobile infrastructure and digital connectivity. They are serving areas where there is the biggest need, financial services, agriculture, health care and education. This is not just an economic focus, but also a social and human one, with organizations such as the EIB and Afrika-Verein helping to promote opportunities and carry out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The issues are completely intertwined: the continent needs better infrastructure to support development and promote clean energy, water, sanitation and transport. The digital economy is serving all these sectors and scalable new businesses are among the strongest assets allowing them to thrive.

[Read More on Devex](#)



AIDING THE WRITING-STALLED PROFESSOR



“Writing-stalled faculty members tend to cope with their frustrations in ways that end up being ineffective, or even destructive,” writes Joli Jensen. Some of these ineffective behaviours, the author adds, include throwing oneself into teaching and service, getting “unnecessarily embroiled” in departmental politics, or pursuing a number of research-related projects that do not meet tenure-and-promotion criteria. But rather than pursuing these avenues, the author suggests that faculty adopt clear and effective practices to increase writing productivity. One proven way to do this, the author adds, is to create an effective faculty writing program. The author concludes by giving tips for how to build such a program.

[Read More on The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Summer Series of Beautiful and Inspiring Nature
Green Frog
Whitefish Lake, Parry Sound, Ontario July



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