



Global Development Update is a monthly bulletin that informs readers about the events, ideas, and people that are shaping an emerging world community.

FEATURED STORY



Was 2017 the best year in human history?

At first glance, 2017 may have seemed like a bad year. Wars in Syria and Yemen raged on, nationalism swept legislative bodies the world over, and natural disasters claimed countless lives. **Look closer, however, and the facts tell a different story.** The number of people living in extreme poverty fell by 217,000 every day. More than 85% of the world's citizens can read, and simple interventions such as vaccinations and breastfeeding saved millions of lives. These examples and more offer a few reasons to be hopeful about 2018.



Global Peace & Justice

UN General Assembly condemns US recognition of Jerusalem

When the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, [the condemnation from the UN General Assembly was swift](#). The body held a vote to denounce the diplomatic announcement, with 128 nations voting in favor of the resolution and only 9 countries-including the US and Israel-voting against. The General Assembly resolution is non-binding, but nevertheless serves as a harsh rebuke of the US decision.



North and South Korea resume use of nuclear hotline

Since 1971, North and South Korea have exchanged daily telephone calls in the demilitarized border town of Panmunjom. [Representatives of both nations sat in buildings a few hundred feet away, and used the "crisis hotline" to bridge an otherwise tense relationship](#). In 2016, North Korea stopped answering the phone. In January, however, use of the hotline resumed, sparking hope that regular communication will help avoid the type of miscalculations that lead to war.



Human Rights

2017 Human Rights Watch news roundup



Photo credit: NYTimes

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is one of the leading organizations fighting for global human rights and a reliable source for humanitarian news. [In 2017 in Human Rights News, the organization explores ten of the year's top stories](#), including the plight of Rohingya in Burma, the war on drugs in the Philippines, and cases of targeted discrimination in Russia and the United States.



Gender Equity

Women made history in 2017

UN Women is the branch of the United Nations tasked with promoting gender equality around the world. [In the organization's 2017 news retrospective](#), UN Women cited an increase in activism, the #metoo movement, breakthrough laws in Iceland and Kyrgyzstan, a surge in female leaders, and record-breaking success for women in entertainment and athletics as just a few examples of how the year was transformative for women around the world.



UN Secretary General gets a C+ from women's groups

In January, [the Feminist U.N. Campaign gave United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres a C+](#) for his lackluster efforts to support feminist causes at the UN. The group, which is made up of various women's rights advocates and UN staff, encouraged the Secretary General to do more to address funding for gender equality, change the organization's patriarchal culture, and stand up against sexual abuse involving UN peacekeepers.

The global gender gap in 2017



The World Economic Forum recently published its annual [Global Gender Gap Report](#). The report ranks countries in terms of various indicators of gender equality, including economic participation, educational attainment, health, and political empowerment. Iceland, Norway, Finland, Rwanda and Sweden came in top five. Iran, Chad, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen were the bottom five.



Environment & Sustainable Development

Young people will be the answer to climate change

In a recent interview with Kumi Naidoo, the South African activist expressed his belief that [young people are going to solve many of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the world today](#). He advised young people to remove their faith in current leaders, and encouraged them to feel empowered to invent and bring a fresh perspective to old problems.



Climate-smart cities

As the world urbanizes, [resilient cities are an increasingly relevant topic](#). One estimate has 65% of the global population living in cities by 2030. Cities are both a driver of climate change and a victim of its effects. In the future, urban buildings, infrastructure, and waste management systems will need to be designed with this objective in mind. In so doing, cities can be part of the solution.



Global Governance & Connectivity

UN Security Council welcomes new members

In January, [Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Poland joined the 15-member UN Security Council](#). Each nation will serve out a two-year term. The powerful body is currently chaired by Kazakhstan. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are permanent members.



Photo credit: Politico



Poverty Reduction & Income Inequality

The World Bank reports economic optimism in 2017

[A new World Bank report cites that 2017 far exceeded economic predictions](#). Investment, manufacturing, and trade continued to grow apace, alongside efforts to reduce poverty. In 2018, growth is expected to slow to 2.2 percent in developed economies, while emerging markets can expect to see closer to 4.5 percent growth. According to the World Bank, "2018 is on track to be the first year since the financial crisis that the global economy will be operating at or near full capacity."

Growing the middle class



According to a recent report by the Brookings Institution, [there are more middle class families in the world than ever before](#). In 2016, this number was 3.2 billion, nearly half of the global population. This finding has far-reaching social and economic implications, as a larger middle class can generally be correlated with a happier population. In the future, however, governments

will be pressed to find the right balance between taxation and provision of services for this growing population.

About Global Development Update and TGCI

The Global Development Update focuses only on what is happening at the global level in six domains: Human Rights, Gender Equity, Environment & Sustainable Development, Poverty Reduction & Income Inequality, Global Governance & Connectivity, and Global Peace & Justice. It is intended for use by anyone concerned about the direction in which the world is going and the well being of our planet. Global Development Update is a publication of [The Global Citizens' Initiative](#) (TGCI); the editor is Camilla B. Vogt.

[TGCI](#) is an international non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote the practice of global citizenship and bring people and their organizations together to build a sustainable world community for all. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send to editor@gcitizen.org.

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