



YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE

News to Follow

Women

Want to help India's children? Empower mothers

A growing body of global research is pointing India toward a solution for its child-malnutrition crisis, which rivals that of sub-Saharan Africa: Give women legal control of the land they farm with their husbands.

"Women in India have a lower status and therefore less control over resources, both land and money, and consequently do not have the leverage to ensure that their children's needs are met," writes Renee Giovarelli, executive director of the Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights. [The Guardian \(London\)/Poverty Matters blog](#)

Melinda Gates talks development

Melinda Gates, of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, recently fielded questions from readers of The New York Times, encouraging people to become students of the causes they care about. "It is incredibly important not only to invest in health, but also to invest in efforts that stimulate economic growth, expand access to opportunity, and help the poor raise themselves out of poverty," she said. [The New York Times \(tiered subscription model\)/On The Ground blog](#)

UNICEF officials talks of past, future challenges

In an interview, Susan Bissell, chief of child protection programs for UNICEF, talks about influences on her career, as well as the reputation of the UN agency and the emerging global challenges it is facing. Among the programs she mentions is the public-private partnership, Together for Girls, for which the agency is conducting first-ever surveys of violence against children -- including sexual violence -- in households across the world. [CFR.org/Politics, Power and Preventive Action blog](#)

Legal reforms look to protect Haitian women

Haiti's struggle to rebuild in the wake of the devastating January 2010 earthquake has included efforts to strengthen protections of the rights of women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is working on draft legislation to better protect against gender-based violence. Amanda Klasing of Human Rights Watch writes, "[W]e must keep reminding ourselves and others that not everything in Haiti is going wrong. Women's rights leaders in Haiti are proving this again with their remarkable work to change the laws to guarantee justice and equality for women and girls." [The Huffington Post](#)

Ban outlines priorities for his second term

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined his priorities for his second term in office in a speech this morning before the General Assembly. Ban's "action agenda" includes a focus sustainable development, conflict mitigation, preventing diseases, increasing opportunities for women and girls and other global priorities, as well as harnessing partnerships and strengthening the UN. Ban said, "Waves of change are surging around us. If we navigate wisely, we can create a more secure and sustainable future for all." [UN News Centre](#)

Freedom of Information and Internet

Adding It Up: Press Freedom, Democratic Health and Public Media Funding

This week Reporters Without Borders released its 2011-2012 Press Freedom Index, and much of the attention has focused on the fact that the United States has dropped 27 places to 47th in the world, thanks in large part to the journalist arrests at Occupy Wall Street events. For a nation that has built its model of

governance on freedom of the press, that ranking should be a wake-up call, and should spark a national debate about how we are going to defend the First Amendment in the digital age. [Josh Stearns, SavetheNews.org](#)

Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage In a sort of coming-of-age moment, Twitter announced that upon request, it would block certain messages in countries where they were deemed illegal. The move immediately prompted an outcry, arguments and even calls for a boycott from some users. Twitter in turn sought to explain that this was the best way to comply with the laws of different countries. And the whole episode, swiftly amplified worldwide through Twitter itself, offered a telling glimpse of what happens when a scrappy Internet startup tries to become a multinational business. [Somni Sengupta, New York Times](#)

Citizens Inundated

All told TV broadcast companies stand to pocket more than \$3 billion in political ad revenues by November. What they're not doing is letting viewers and voters in on the full story behind all this money and all these ads. Broadcast media, understandably, have no interest in shedding light on this excessive transfer of money. As a result, we are facing a crisis that threatens to undermine the most important single action people take in a democracy: voting. [Timothy Karr, Huffington Post](#)

The Public's Right to Know

People are fed up with fake news on TV. People are angry about countless political ads whose backers are shrouded in secrecy. People want to know how much local news their TV stations actually produce. Having easy access to broadcasters' public files is the first step toward holding our broadcasters accountable. [Megan Tady, SavetheNews.org](#)

Storify Story of the Year: A Detailed Inventory of Reporter Arrests at Occupy Protests

Free Press' Josh Stearns combines the craftsmanship of traditional journalism with the latest tools of new media to contribute an important and lasting piece of enterprise journalism. Three dozen arrests that could have been forgotten or misrepresented instead became a part of the larger Occupy story, clearly identifying one of the key questions about how law enforcement was handling the protests. [Storify.com](#)

The FCC Loses Mr. Public Interest, Michael J. Copps

The FCC begins the new year without Mr. Public Interest, Michael J. Copps, an outspoken critic of media consolidation. His strong, persistent voice will be missed on a panel evermore inclined to move newspapers, radio, television and broadband toward the smothering embrace of corporate conglomeration. [Seattle Times](#)

PBS President Punches Back

PBS President Paula Kerger responded to presidential hopeful Mitt Romney's call to end federal funding for public broadcasting, saying only 15 percent of its budget comes from the federal government, but that percentage is vital to smaller, poorer, mostly rural stations. Changing PBS to an ad-supported network would force PBS to stop airing much of its arts and culture programming in favor of advertiser-friendly shows that already are seen on network and cable channels. [Robert Bianco, USA Today](#)

Free Press Action Fund Calls on Congress to Return MPAA's Dirty Money

The Free Press Action Fund called on Congress to return campaign donations from the Motion Picture Association of America. In an interview last week, MPAA President Chris Dodd, a former U.S. senator, threatened to cut off campaign donations to members of Congress who vote against legislation the MPAA supports. It's time that Congress showed that its votes are no longer for sale. [Free Press](#)

RNC seeks end to ban on direct corporate contributions to candidates

Why stop with Citizens United? Indeed, the Republican National Committee has not. It filed a brief with the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals seeking an end to the federal ban on direct contributions from corporations to candidates. (Citizens United said corporations could spend unlimited sums on such things as broadcast ads, fliers and so forth.)

White House Blasts Internet Blacklisting Bills

The Obama administration said that it would not support legislation mandating changes to Internet infrastructure to fight online copyright and trademark infringement. [David Kravets, Wired](#)

India sets sights on higher education

Indian authorities are scrambling to build 1,000 universities and 50,000 colleges over the next decade to promote higher education and development. The number of young Indians entering the workforce is expected to reach 100 million by 2020, and authorities hope increased higher education opportunities will help propel India's economy in the decades to come. [The Christian Science Monitor](#)

Why Newspapers Often Don't Call Out Politicians for Lying

At worst, bloggers and magazine writers let their biases hurt the accuracy of their work when they're empowered to inject judgments into their coverage. But at best, they're empowered to tell the whole truth. The traditional model of newspaper writing is, at best, limited in that regard. There are reasons, some good and some bad, for those limits, but they're going to doom newspapers in the end. Why settle for less than the best work when it's all accessible via the Web? [Conor Friedersdorf, The Atlantic](#)

Google Announces Privacy Changes Across Products; Users Can't Opt Out

Google will soon know far more about who you are and what you do on the Web. The Web giant announced that it plans to follow the activities of users across nearly all of its ubiquitous sites, including YouTube, Gmail and its leading search engine. Google has already been collecting some of this information. But for the first time, it is combining data across its websites to stitch together a fuller portrait of users. [Cecilia Kang, Washington Post](#)

Scalia says, if you don't like the nasty political ads, turn off your TV

Don't like all those attack ads, which you are seeing in part because of the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision? Turn them off! It's not the Supreme Court's fault! So says Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

Environment

Rio+20 to shift focus to development

The UN's upcoming Rio+20 conference will focus on sustainable development, not climate change, although goals such as conserving resources and reducing emissions are still on the agenda. United Nations Foundation President Timothy E. Wirth said, "The debate's changed because of China, India, Brazil and South Africa, the very rapid and surprisingly powerful growth of the newly industrialized countries." A draft document recently released for the June summit outlines seven main issues, including jobs, energy, food, water and disasters. [Reuters \(1/24\)](#)

Assessing the impact of Durban

The so-called Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, which requires 194 countries to develop a legally binding protocol to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases, could prove "to be the most encompassing and farthest reaching agreement that any climate conference has ever reached," said Christiana Figueres, head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Still, Figueres said, the deal is only one step toward "an energy and industrial revolution the likes of which we have never seen." [The New York Times \(tiered subscription model\)](#)

Ban Ki-moon on sustainable energy

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon frames the challenges facing governments, businesses and civil institutions at the World Future Energy Summit, which opens next week in Abu Dhabi. "My vision is for a world with universal energy access coupled with significantly improved rates of energy efficiency and a doubling of renewable energy in our mix of fuel sources. The obstacles are not so much technical as human. We need to raise sustainable energy to the top of the global agenda and focus our attention, ingenuity, resources, and investments to make it a reality," he writes. [The New York Times \(tiered subscription model\)](#)

Solar power affordability drives development

The falling prices of technology associated with solar power are opening up the possibility of shifting away from fossil fuels for millions across the developing world. About 1.3 billion people worldwide are without steady access to an affordable power source. Richenda Van Leeuwen, senior director for Energy and Climate at the United Nations Foundation, said, "This sector has exploded. There's been a sea change in the last five years." [MIT Technology Review online](#)