

IHP news 517: David Malpass - the World Bank's 13th President & Ebola Crisis in DRC increasingly out of control

(12 April 2019)

The weekly International Health Policies (IHP) newsletter is an initiative of the Health Policy unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium.

Dear Colleagues,

As you will notice, this week's newsletter is shorter than usual. While the Chief Editor, Kristof Decoster, is tied up with attending the EV Governance Board Meeting, being held in Dubai this week, I have been given the responsibility of taking care of the newsletter. It is finally time to put the lessons I learned as an IHP resident in these past few months, into practice. While matching up to your supervisor's level of work and efficiency is aspirational, it is also challenging. I have tried to put together the newsletter to the best of my ability.

The key highlights of this week's issue include coverage of World Health Day events, the WHO Partners Forum, 2nd WHO Fair Pricing Forum, the World Bank's new Director & the WB/IMF Spring Meetings, DRC seeing record setting Ebola cases for two consecutive days (the WHO DG decided to convene an emergency committee meeting to assess if Ebola should be declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)), State of Civil Society Report 2019 and catastrophic signs of Climate Change (as always) among other issues. Andrew Harmer in [his blog](#) suggests WHO should declare Climate Change (also) as a PHEIC, in order to channelize resources, actions and strong political will towards addressing it.

Enjoy your reading.

Deepika Saluja

Featured Article

The Good, The Bad and The Dirty

By Jeroen De Man (Junior Researcher, University of Antwerp) &

Hanani Tabana (Senior Lecturer, School of Public Health, University of Western Cape)

Planetary health is 'hot' and getting even hotter every day. In science too, we are increasingly feeling the heat; the importance of environmental changes, climate change in particular, is growing. A typical indicator of an issue's rise on the global health agenda is the number of related terms that appear on the (scientific) market. Planetary Health, Eco-Health, One Health, Environmental Health, etc. are becoming customary. But, before we get stuck in a semantic discussion, we would like to give some attention to how changes in the environment may influence contemporary scientists.

Over the last few months, tens of thousands of secondary school children in several countries have been protesting for substantial (i.e. truly transformative) climate solutions. Some might call the youngsters movement 'a good epidemic', but certain politicians would [not agree](#) with that assessment, as in their opinion, "children need to keep their mouths shut and study". Our own interpretation of that stance? "Before you are worth it to make a statement to us, (adult) politicians, you should have entered the job market and have aligned with our neoliberal values. If you still make noise after that, this must mean that: either you are lazy, you are a loser, or you are too intelligent for this position (which is a code for 'weird or autistic')". In other words, you are not someone people want to listen to.

Like many, we were pleasantly surprised by our younger fellow citizens' protest actions, yet we also wonder: Why them? Why do a bunch of schoolkids take to the streets, while far too many scientists who are supposed to be "on top" of things, keep working on their research (and keeping their mouths mostly shut, unlike these brave kids)? Is this the result of a generation gap? Do the current badge of young scientists belong to a wave of silent followers?

We think that what explains this lack of enthusiasm among scientists is the current climate in which they find themselves. The current academic environment is a highly competitive one and we couldn't agree more with Logan Wilson's phrase: "publish or perish" (although perhaps an update is necessary: nowadays, winning grants seems to have become more important than publications). Just as politicians think in legislative sessions and votes, scientists may have fallen prey to thinking in grant periods, publications and citations. Much lower on the academic's list of importance is engagement in education, and almost 'non-significant' is societal engagement (unless it contributes significantly to the fame of your institution).

This brings us back to the title of this piece in which we distinguish three groups of scientists, broadly speaking. While this distinction can be applied to many socially relevant themes, we will maintain our focus on climate change. In addition, we want to remark that while making distinctions may shed light on how things work, the resulting categories are often arbitrary. The same is true for the

categories we will differentiate below. People belonging to only one of these – in a clear-cut way - will always be the exception rather than the rule. But we have a hunch that most of you will recognize and find yourselves more in one category than the other.

Let's start with the **bad guys**. As in several other fields, certain scientists are incentivized (or even pressured) by lobby groups to publish to their advantage or refrain from publishing to that group's disadvantage. Although we are not against industry, the government or any other groups investing in science, this investment should happen in a transparent way, and results that may be detrimental to the funder's reputation and/or bottom line also need to be disclosed (and acted upon). Just like the tobacco industry and their scientists had been aware of the harmful effects of tobacco for a long time, major oil companies like ExxonMobil have been [aware of their potential contribution to global warming](#) for decades. Not speaking out, or not being transparent when being one of the scientists who was funded by Exxon raises moral questions (although some claim not to have [been aware](#) of the intentions of the company that funded their research). More recently, several oil majors have improved their tactics through funding new technologies to generate low-carbon power. From an optimistic point of view, this was quite a progressive move which indeed may be helpful in lowering future emissions, however, realistically, such investments remain very small ([barely 3%](#) of their total spending), yet they literally buy such companies the legitimacy to keep on expanding their business as usual. Based on the same strategy to mislead the public, oil majors spend [> \\$195 million](#) annually on campaigns which suggest they support action against climate change.

The **good ones** are the group of scientists who, beyond providing quality research, take an active stance with the intention of improving society and the world, rather than their own interests or bank accounts. These scientists may be funded by public money or private companies: we do not think "the good ones" are only to be found among publicly funded scientists.

One may question whether scientists should engage in activism at all (and the issue of climate change is no different). Aren't they the ones who are too intelligent for our society or rather too weird or autistic? And shouldn't they leave it up to no nonsense politicians whose job this is...? Well, it is probably a farfetched comparison, but in most societies, one is obliged by law to prevent people from committing suicide. Against the backdrop of an entire species that risks committing suicide in the coming decades, from an ethical perspective, the choice between keeping silent because of so called 'scientific independence' (a hoax in my opinion - yes I am borrowing that word from a specific individual) or openly trying to prevent bad things from happening shouldn't be too difficult...

Finally, the **dirty ones** (and probably the biggest group) are the ones that align their work with what is supposed to be lucrative in terms of winning grants and publications. They fuel the publication machine and produce science because of their own interest, prestige or career. However, apart from growing (big and influential) in science, they don't contribute actively to a better environment, they don't adapt their own behavior, nor do they help improve the environment (al footprint) of their institution. For the ones among you who prefer one-liners, these are the people who are on E-mission rather than on A-mission. As such, certain scientists may ask themselves if the incremental effect of their research (in terms of health improvement) may not disappear if we were to fully take into account their behavior, including their [tendency to travel across the globe](#). *(As a reminder – we define the categories here as "Ideal types", we realize few scientists only do science for their own*

career and status, just like few of the good ones are so altruistic they never even think of their own careers.)

Unfortunately, to put it mildly, the current scientific environment doesn't see much wrong with taking this dirty path, and so rather than spending a Sunday afternoon protesting in the streets, one may start a new grant proposal in which incorporating hot topics like climate change and planetary health is "de rigueur", but genuine commitment on the issue is lacking.

As a final message: it's never too late to join another group of scientists, or for your organization to shift (environmental) gears! The kids and teenagers in the streets need you. In fact, they need all of us.

PS: *We would like to use this opportunity to promote some of the many action groups one could support in the fight against climate change: [305africa](#), [scientists4climate](#), [extinction rebellion](#), [union of concerned scientists](#), ...*

The authors of this piece are very grateful for the inputs from: Kristof Decoster (ITM Belgium), Jan Rongé (PhD, Postdoctoral researcher, KU Leuven).

Highlights of the week

WHO Partners Forum

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/09-04-2019-inaugural-who-partners-forum-launches-new-push-for-collaboration-on-global-health>

An inaugural two-day WHO Partners Forum took place in Stockholm this week and was co-hosted with the Government of Sweden.

Global leaders in health and development, representing the public sector, health partnerships and non-State actors, came together to launch a new era of collaboration and innovation around WHO's resource needs. To meet the world's most pressing health challenges, WHO, governments and global health leaders today called for improved partnerships and resourcing to support WHO's mission to deliver care, services and protection for billions of people by 2023. Under the Organization's Thirteenth General Program of Work (GPW13), WHO needs US\$14.1 billion between now and 2023.

Organizers hoped the meeting would result in a shared understanding of how to strengthen partnerships and improve effective financing of WHO, with an emphasis on predictability and flexibility.

WHO Seeks To Strengthen Partnerships, Improve Financing For “Triple Billion” Targets

<https://www.healthpolicy-watch.org/who-seeks-to-strengthen-partnerships-improve-financing-for-triple-billion-targets/>

“Discussions at the forum also called upon member states and partners to increase flexible funding to enable WHO to be more agile in budgeting across the organisation, when implementing its five-year plan towards achieving its “triple billion” targets.”

“WHO's investment case for the GPW13 estimates that its “projected income against the US\$ 14.1 billion is US\$ 4 billion, which includes income from annual dues and long-term pledges,” meaning that WHO has a projected funding gap of US\$ 10.1 billion over the next 5 years. Raising the full US\$ 14.1 billion “will help to save up to 30 million lives, add up to 100 million years of healthy living to the world's population and add up to 4 per cent of economic growth in low and middle-income countries by 2023,” according to the investment case.”

<https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-new-approaches-needed-for-new-health-threats-94646>

WHO needs its partners to play their part by supporting it with more flexible and predictable funding that allows the organization to allocate resources more effectively and efficiently. Sweden is a proud supporter of WHO and the leading provider of flexible funds.

World Health Day

<https://www.healthpolicy-watch.org/universal-health-coverage-world-health-day-theme-reflects-diverse-agendas/>

From healthier diets to access to medicines, an unusually broad array of issues were, directly or indirectly, included in this year's [World Health Day theme of Universal Health Coverage](#) (UHC), reflecting the complexity associated with attaining a goal that has become a key ambition of global health.

U.N. News: 'Health is a right, not a privilege' says WHO chief on World Health Day
"The director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has marked World Health Day, which falls on Sunday, with a reiteration of the U.N.'s stance on health: that it is a fundamental human right, not a privilege. Speaking at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, during an event to launch the day, the WHO chief [said](#) that all people deserve access to health services, 'when and where they need them, without financial hardship'..."

Also read: [World Health Day 2019 Celebrates Health as a Human Right](#)

Dr. Tedros said in the [WHO's World Health Day statement](#). "This is not an unattainable dream, nor will it require billions of dollars to implement. UHC is achievable, right here, right now, for all of us."

See also: Nigerian Minister of Health, Prof. Isaac Adewole argues for [a multi-sectoral approach for Nigeria to achieve UHC and SDGs by 2030](#).

World Bank & World Bank/IMF Spring meetings

<https://www.devex.com/news/world-bank-reforms-found-ineffective-bank-shuffles-senior-staff-94665>

World Bank's Executive Directors select David Malpass as the 13th President of the World Bank Group

http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/05/world-banks-executive-directors-select-david-malpass-13th-president-of-the-world-bank-group?cid=ECR_E_newsletterweekly_EN_EXT_sm2019&deliveryName=DM11248

In World Bank debut, David Malpass looks to win over staff and critics

<https://www.devex.com/news/in-world-bank-debut-david-malpass-looks-to-win-over-staff-and-critics-94655>

In general, people familiar with Malpass' conversations in the lead up to his appointment said he offered some reassurance that, unlike his predecessor Jim Kim, who [introduced sweeping and highly-disruptive reforms](#), he has no plans for a dramatic shakeup of the bank early in his tenure. "We appreciate his willingness to understand staff concerns and engage constructively with us," Daniel Sellen, chair of the staff association, wrote to Devex.

https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/apr/09/new-world-bank-chief-confirms-commitment-to-environment?CMP=share_btn_tw

"In his first day at the helm of the Washington-based institution, David Malpass said helping developing countries cope with global warming would remain central to the bank's mission. Malpass also said there would be no change in the bank's refusal to lend for new coal-fired power plants, despite Trump's strong support for US coal producers. "Climate change is a key problem facing people," Malpass said. "It presents specific problems and we are addressing them through adaptation and through meeting our climate change action plan. My expectation is that the bank continues the direction it has been pursuing in terms of those goals."

"In addition to tackling the problems of climate change, Malpass said it was important that developing countries had robust private sectors and encouraged women to take a full role in the economy."

Devex Opinion: [5 priorities for the World Bank's new leader](#)

by Masood Ahmed, The President of the Center for Global Development

"During his campaign, Malpass said some of the right things but was silent on other priorities for the World Bank. To win the support of all his 189 members, Malpass must now unambiguously endorse the bank's role in helping the world meet five challenges":

Africa's development and integration into the world economy; helping emerging economies and middle income countries make the right development decisions and drive the global growth; target the people affected by fragility, conflict and violence; focusing on issues that go beyond borders, like preparing for the next pandemic or dealing with climate change etc. and lastly making sure that the bank in the development best practice debate of the 21st century.

[World Bank pandemic facility 'an embarrassing mistake,' says former chief economist](#)

*"Lawrence Summers, the [World Bank's](#) former chief economist, **slammed an initiative launched in 2016 that aimed to create an insurance market for pandemics, calling the facility "an embarrassing mistake" and a symptom of "financial goofiness" within the institution. ... The World Bank needs to be squarely against financial goofiness in support of a worthy cause, and there's a ton of that going around,"** Summers said."*

During an event at the [Center for Global Development](#) in Washington, D.C., where five former senior World Bank officials shared their views on what President David Malpass, who took office on Tuesday, should prioritize during his term, Summers said, **"Before Malpass can do anything else**

though, he must offer reassurance that he has not brought the Trump administration's political agenda with him to the World Bank."

Bretton Woods project – 2019 Spring Meetings Preamble

With 'flood waters rising', World Bank & IMF's answers to 21st century's key challenges remain inadequate

<https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2019/04/2019-spring-meetings-preamble/>

See also <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2019/04/unsustainable-the-imfs-approach-to-the-sustainable-development-goals/> (on 'SDG washing' by IMF)

Critical analysis ahead of the Spring Meetings.

Follow other live updates from the Spring Meetings [here](#).

G20 in Osaka offers chance for health and financial policymakers to stop fighting and join hands

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/05/national/g20-osaka-offers-chance-health-financial-policymakers-stop-fighting-join-hands/#.XKyrwFUzblU>

"To effectively tackle global health issues, it's crucial that the Group of 20 nations use their June summit to overcome the barriers that have traditionally separated health experts and policymakers from financial and economic leaders."

"In the past, things have operated in different silos.. Health and finance ministers must understand that if they want significant growth, be it in high- or low-income economies, finance ministers and the financial community have to be involved in addressing issues involving health. Failure to do so means these economies will massively underperform," said Alan Donnelly, convener of the G20 Health and Development Partnership.

Philanthropy in China

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/report/philanthropy-in-china/>

In the last 8 years, Chinese philanthropy has quadrupled from \$6bn in 2009 to \$23.4bn in 2017 (an annual growth rate of 20%). This growing powerhouse of Philanthropy, driven by Chinese private sector and a new generation of wealth, could shape the future of international giving and development.

Venezuela

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/05/un-urged-to-declare-full-scale-crisis-in-venezuela-as-health-system-collapses>

Bloomberg: U.S. shifts Venezuela strategy at U.N. to focus on toll of crisis. "The U.S. is seeking to highlight the growing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela at the United Nations after its earlier bids to call for new elections faced stiff opposition from veto-wielding rivals Russia and China. The U.S. called for the U.N. Security Council to hold a meeting on the deteriorating situation in the Andean nation, according to an official with knowledge of the request. The move came as a new report said that Venezuela requires a full-scale U.N. response to address increasing levels of food insecurity, disease, and shortages of medicine..."

Alcohol control

Exclusive: Partnering with alcohol industry on public health is not okay, WHO says

<https://www.bmj.com/content/365/bmj.l1666>

"The World Health Organization will not engage with the alcohol industry when developing alcohol policy or implementing public health measures, its staff have been told, and any government seeking advice from a collaboration with industry should be warned of the dangers."

The message that partnering, collaborating, taking funding, and even talking with the alcohol industry on some subjects is not acceptable has been laid out in an internal note to WHO staff."

WHO's 2nd Fair Pricing Forum

MSF: Secret medicine prices cost lives

@Health-E News: *"Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is calling upon governments to put an end to the secrecy that rules in the field of pharmaceutical products when they meet this week at the World Health Organisation Fair Pricing Forum to discuss access to essential medicines."*

<https://www.healthpolicy-watch.org/who-led-fair-pricing-forum-gathers-diverse-groups-to-improve-drug-access/>

*"A diverse group of civil society, industry and government representatives **convened today at the WHO-led 2nd Fair Pricing Forum** in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the quest for new solutions that can unlock people's access to desperately needed drugs at more affordable prices. The two-day meeting, co-sponsored with South Africa and involving some 30 countries and 40 industry and*

nonprofit groups, comes at a time when the debate over drug access has become increasingly polarized.”

“Transparency has also become the clarion call of leading civil society groups such as Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders/MSF) and others for full public disclosure, globally and nationally, of the costs of new drug development and prices of bulk drug sales to national health systems. They were among the organizers of a side event on the Forum’s opening day under the theme “No Fair Price without Transparency.” Transparency is not only a matter of fairness, but also a factor for better governance of pharmaceutical markets.”

Garment industry

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/07/violence-sexual-abuse-vietnam-garment-factory>

“Nearly half (43.1%) of 763 women interviewed in factories in three Vietnamese provinces said they had suffered at least one form of violence and/or harassment in the previous year, according to a study by the [Fair Wear Foundation](#) and [Care International](#) out on Monday.”.. “There’s a significant culture of silence around this, and as a result the numbers are probably even higher”

Synergy Conference Underscores Inextricable Links Between Climate, Sustainable Development Agendas

[The Global Conference on strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), held from 1-3 April in Copenhagen, Denmark.

@[SDG Knowledge Hub](#): *“The first-ever Climate and SDGs Synergy Conference identified action areas to advance efforts to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the SDGs, based on the recognition that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels is critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”*

Artificial Intelligence in Global Health: a brave new world

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30814-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30814-1/fulltext)

“The Artificial Intelligence in Global Health [report](#), published on April 1, 2019, looks at 27 cases of AI use in health care and distils them into four key groupings—population health, patient and front-line health worker virtual assistants, and physician clinical decision support. It hypothesises how AI solutions could improve access, quality, and efficacy of global health systems while accounting for their technological maturity and feasibility.

The report sets the framework for a proactive and strategic approach to accelerate the development of cost-effective use of AI in global health by investing in case-specific, systematic, and technology-related key areas.”

Ebola DRC

<https://www.statnews.com/2019/04/10/who-asks-panel-to-weigh-whether-ebola-outbreak-is-global-emergency/>

Since the attack on Ebola treatment centers at Katwa and Butembo in February, the Ebola cases have soared and the outbreak that looked to be under control then, looks far from it now.

“With new case numbers rising at an alarming rate, the World Health Organization said Wednesday it will again look at whether the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be declared a global health emergency.”

[CIDRAP News](#): DRC sees alarming new trend as Ebola cases grow by 37 in 3days

“With 37 Ebola cases reported in the past 72 hours, the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) raged this weekend and [Monday], and the 16 cases reported [Sunday] are the most for a single day during this 8-month outbreak. The new cases raise the outbreak total to 1,154, including 731 deaths, for a case-fatality rate of 6.”

April 9: [Ebola cases climb to 1,168 as more health workers infected](#)

With 14 new cases reported from a broad range of larger and smaller hot spots, the total outbreak number rose to 1168 cases, with 1102 confirmed and 66 probable cases and 274 suspected cases. The overall fatality count rose to 741.

April 10: [DRC sees record-setting day, with 18 Ebola cases](#)

“Today the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) recorded 18 new cases in the ongoing Ebola outbreak in North Kivu and Ituri province, the largest single-day jump since the outbreak began last August. The previous record was 16 cases, on Apr 7... In its latest outbreak update yesterday, the WHO said 199 cases have been confirmed in the 21 days from Mar 18 to Apr 7.”

In the light of these developments, WHO DG convened an emergency committee meeting on the 12th of April under the International Health Regulations (IHR) to determine whether the outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, and what recommendations should be made to manage it.

April 11: [DRC Ebola surge marks 2nd straight record-setting day](#)

“For the second day in a row, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reported a record number of Ebola infections—this time, 20 cases—putting an exclamation point on the outbreak

ahead of tomorrow's World Health Organization (WHO) emergency committee meeting to assess whether the developments constitute a public health emergency declaration."

.. "the WHO said the surge in cases over the past week underscores the complex reality of responding to an outbreak in a geographically difficult area with a highly fluid population, sporadic attacks by armed groups, and limited healthcare infrastructure"

Health debate rising around the upcoming Indian election

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30848-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30848-7/fulltext)

"The BJP will be promoting its Ayushman Bharat scheme further, while the main party in opposition decries an insurance-based model. With 900 million eligible voters, India's general election is the world's largest democratic exercise, taking place in seven phases from April 11 to May 19. The results will decide not only who leads India for the next 5 years but also health-care politics for 1.3 billion people in the country.

.. Now, affordable health care has become a major talking point for politicians, although no consensus has been reached on the best way forward. A recent national survey by the non-governmental Association of Democratic Reforms indicated that better health care is now one of the top voter priorities across India."

Post-Castro Cuba: new constitution expands health rights

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30812-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30812-8/fulltext)

"2019 marks the 60th anniversary of the 26th of July Movement, which established Fidel Castro as the leader of the new Cuban Government ... Cuba is now undergoing a major overhaul of its constitution. The [new constitution](#) was heavily amended, after more than 80 000 consultation meetings, and was voted in by referendum on Feb 25, with 90% of valid votes cast in favour. Set to be proclaimed by the National Assembly on April 10 as we go to press, this constitution further enshrines the people's commitment to universal health care and expands social, political, and economic rights in Cuba."

Many changes including **women's reproductive and sexual rights; protection from gender based violence; gender, sexual orientation, identity, age, ethnic origin, disability, and territorial origin being added to the protected list; legalize gay marriage; health based approach for sexual diversity; right to health, dignified housing, food and water; protection of older people and restoration of a presumption of innocence in the justice system, have been included in the new constitution.**

“Unfortunately, until it is backed up by capital, this reform will remain mostly aspirational. However, that this new constitution has received widespread popular support. “

Landmark study on asthma & vehicle pollution

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/10/vehicle-pollution-results-in-4m-child-asthma-cases-a-year>

“Four million children develop asthma every year as a result of air pollution from cars and trucks, equivalent to 11,000 new cases a day, a landmark study has found... The damage to children’s health is not limited to China (760,000 cases) and India (350,000 cases), where pollution levels are particularly high. In UK and US cities, the researchers blame traffic pollution for a quarter of all new childhood asthma cases.

The research, [published in the journal Lancet Planetary Health](#), is the first global assessment of the impact of traffic fumes on childhood asthma based on high-resolution pollution data.

“This landmark study shows the massive global burden of asthma in children caused by traffic pollution,” said Prof Chris Griffiths, at Queen Mary University of London and the co-director of the Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research, who was not part of the research team. “Asthma is only one of the multiple adverse effects of pollution on children’s health. Governments must act now to protect children.””

Official Development Assistance: Poorest countries bear the brunt as aid levels fall for second successive year

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/10/poorest-countries-bear-the-brunt-as-aid-levels-fall-for-second-successive-year>

Aid levels dropped last year by 2.7% from 2017, with the poorest countries worst hit, according to [figures](#) published by OECD. *“With refugee numbers at their highest since the second world war, disasters like Cyclone Idai devastating lives, and food crises looming in Yemen and elsewhere, the fall in humanitarian aid is particularly alarming. Vulnerable people across the world rely on this essential lifeline when disaster hits.”*

Angel Gurría, the OECD secretary general, also expressed concern: *“This picture of stagnating public aid is particularly worrying as it follows data showing that private development flows are [also declining](#). Donor countries are not living up to their [2015 pledge](#) to ramp up development finance, and this bodes badly for us being able to achieve the 2030 sustainable development goals.”*

PAHO - Universal Health in the 21st Century: 40 Years of Alma-Ata: Report of the High-Level Commission

http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/50742/9789275120682_eng.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

“Forty years after Alma-Ata, the premises remain the same, but our capabilities have increased, as has the conviction that we can do better.

The High Level Commission report highlights PAHO’s potential contributions to other regions of the world, enriching their national health policies with experiences that are often equivalent in terms of obstacles and opportunities. Second, and more importantly, **the report emphasizes that it is up to us to make a difference—to guarantee that all people enjoy the necessary conditions to fully exercise their right to health. In all regions of the world and at all times, this is an effort that must continue.**

This report offers a path for action on primary health care, understood as a comprehensive strategy to act on social determinants and create specific spaces for communities to take part in 21st century models of care.

Fostering access to and use of contextualized knowledge to support health policy-making: lessons from the Policy Information Platform in Nigeria

<https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-019-0431-4>

Uneke and her colleagues in this article shared lessons from implementing the Policy Information Platform (PIP) – a pilot one stop source for evidence repository in Nigeria, designed to eliminate barriers to accessing policy related evidence and inform policy decisions. The findings suggest that the pilot did facilitate access to information based on local context and evidence for better informed policy making.

Global governance of health

ODI report - Subnational investment in human capital

<https://www.odi.org/publications/11308-subnational-investment-human-capital>

This report, jointly prepared with [Development Initiatives](#), reviews how well public finance is targeted at subnational level. It covers investment in human capital, spending on health and education, by both government and donors in all of the 82 poorest countries – that is all low- and

lower middle-income countries and least developed countries. Two key findings of the report are that:

There is **little evidence that the governments/donors are responding to the distribution of poverty within countries**, on average poorer regions receive 15% less than the national average for government spending on education, and **data on allocation of finances at the subnational level is extraordinarily lacking**.

Blended finance in the poorest countries: the need for a better approach

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12666.pdf>

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/04/05/looming-debt-crisis-in-africa-myth-or-reality/>

While another systemic sovereign debt crisis is not imminent, the rapid pace of the debt increase in recent years, as well as debt servicing costs and important changes in the structure of the region's debt buildup, compared with that of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) era, are unsettling.

Moreover, although the increase in debt has been very rapid in recent years, the pace of accumulation has slowed considerably. Between 2013 and 2016, the median debt-to-GDP ratio rose from 33 percent to 52 percent in 2016. That is roughly 5 percentage points of GDP per year.

State of Civil Society report

<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019>

The eighth edition of the Annual state of civil society report 2019 observed a range of issues, actions and trends that affected civil society in 2018, under 4 key areas: everyday issues and people's protests, challenging exclusion and claiming rights, the state of democracy and civil society engaging at the international level.

Annual report WHO Alliance for HPSR

<https://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/publications/ar-2018/en/>

With 80 ongoing projects in 45 countries, 65% of the research grantees as women, 53% as early career researchers, and 19% from historically disadvantaged groups, and 1010 decisions makers sensitized to evidence use, the WHO Alliance for HPSR released its annual report highlighting ways in which championed health policy and systems research in 2018.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/04/imf-governments-could-save-1-trillion-in-taxes-by-curbing-corruption.html>

“Cracking down on corruption would reap big economic rewards for governments around the world, increasing total tax revenues by \$1 trillion (~1.25% of global GDP), according to new analysis by the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#).

A 2018 survey by the OECD found 42 percent of state-owned enterprises reported corrupt acts or other irregular practices in their company during the past three years. ... The IMF urged governments to take a “comprehensive” approach to tackling corruption, which requires strong “political will.” Key steps include clear laws around tax collection, independent oversight and audits, and strict punishments for corrupt acts. A free press and government initiatives to digitize public data also help reduce corruption, the report found.

DFID's share of UK aid rises — but it's not all good news

<https://www.devex.com/news/dfid-s-share-of-uk-aid-rises-but-it-s-not-all-good-news-94633>

“Aid groups have welcomed the news that the U.K. [Department for International Development](#) increased its share of the aid budget for the first time in five years in 2018, as new figures were released Thursday — however, some cautioned that all is not what it seems. The government’s [provisional U.K. aid statistics](#) revealed that DFID spent 75 percent of U.K. official development assistance last year, up from 72 percent in 2017. This represents an increase of 7.8 percent, or £792 million (\$1.03 billion).”

<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3004873/china-refuses-give-developing-country-status-wto-despite-us>

China will refuse to give up the “special and differential treatment” it enjoys as a developing nation at the World Trade Organization, in a rebuke to a US proposal that would pare back the privileges China and other nations enjoy on trade. Countries like [China and India](#), Venezuela and South Africa insist that the preferential treatment is an important cornerstone of the global trading system. The four countries have already submitted a paper to the WTO saying that the self-classification of developing member status has been a long-standing practice and best serves the WTO’s objectives.

“[@baumfran](#) calls for 3 more SDGs: ☆ mandate corporate accountability; ☆ achieve a redistribution of global wealth; ☆ introduce a global financial transaction tax “

UHC

<https://www.uhc2030.org/news-events/uhc2030-news/news-from-the-uhc2030-private-sector-constituency-546099/>

UHC2030 is kicking off work on private sector engagement in close collaboration with WHO, the World Bank and the World Economic Forum (WEF). We envisage two major contributions this year:

1. **A global multi-stakeholder statement of how the private sector can contribute to UHC** to be launched at the UN High-level Meeting on UHC on 23 September 2019
2. **Multi-stakeholder dialogues in 2-3 countries to identify the potential role of the private sector to fill gaps and improve primary health care**

On 21 May 2019, UHC2030 together with the WEF and WHO is hosting an event on the edge of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland called '**Profiting from profit: aligning private sector interests with UHC goals**'.

https://www.who.int/health_financing/documents/analytical-guide-to-assess-mixed-provider-system/en/

*“The present document presents **an analytical guide with questions to assess a country’s provider payment system in greater detail in order to identify options for better aligning the payment system with the objectives of UHC.** The purpose of the analysis is to inform and improve the national policy dialogue on purchasing. It assists in making the case for and drawing attention to the need of **aligning payment methods within and across purchasers as an important step towards strategic purchasing.**”*

Download the full report here:

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311020/9789241515337-eng.pdf?ua=1>

Planetary health

<https://andrewharmer.org/2019/04/09/should-the-who-declare-climate-change-a-public-health-emergency-of-international-concern/>

*“If the WHO really did want to lead, to do something that could empower ministers of health to act beyond the diplomatic sounds-like-doing-something-but-isn’t-really, then here’s something it might consider – **declare climate change a public health emergency of international concern.**”*

The risk of inaction is going to be beyond comprehension, exposing the entire humanity to the greatest public health challenge in the human history. **WHO declaring it a public health emergency of international concern could have significant impact in mobilizing action and resources towards it.**

https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/04/08/researchers-warn-arctic-has-entered-unprecedented-state-threatens-global-climate?amp&_twitter_impression=true

A new research paper reveals that the **arctic air temperatures (referred to as ‘the smoking gun’)** are rapidly warming up bringing changes in the world’s northern polar regions (with consistently breaking high temperature records) and these changes will continue to have massive negative impacts across the globe. Last week, climatologists **said Alaska experienced the highest March temperatures ever recorded.**

Watch this short [YouTube video](#) explaining the changes in key indicators of the arctic climate from 1971 to 2017.

[The BMJ](#): *WHO pulls support from initiative promoting global move to plant-based foods*
"The World Health Organization pulled out of sponsoring a global initiative promoting healthier and sustainable diets across the world after pressure from an Italian official who raised concerns about the impact of the diet on people's health and livelihoods. The event -- the launch of the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health in Geneva, Switzerland on 28 March -- still went ahead, sponsored by the government of Norway..." (Torjesen, 4/9).

Global Health Governance - Special Issue: Climate Change and Global Health Security: call for abstracts

<http://blogs.shu.edu/ghg/2019/04/08/special-issue-climate-change-and-global-health-security/>

"The health security impact of climate change will be determined not necessarily by the natural systems that generate exposure to risk, but rather by the ability of social and political systems to respond rapidly enough to minimize climate-related health impacts as well as react to new risks."

Researchers interested in contributing to the special issue must submit a 250-word abstract to *Global Health Governance* (ghgovernance@gmail.com) and CC the Managing Editor Courtney Tan (courtneypagetan@gmail.com) by May 25.

ECOSOS Partnership Forum

UN News: [The clock is ticking on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, says UN Deputy Chief](#)

"Climate change is ravaging the planet... staggering numbers of children and youth – especially girls and young women – still lack access to basic education and healthcare services, [and] people in many countries are starved of economic opportunities, decent work and social protection measures", she told the 2019 [ECOSOC Partnership Forum](#), where governments, business representatives and other influencers met to discuss how partnerships can best advance and the 17 [SDGs](#).

"Our task is immense, but many of the pathways to change are in plain sight", she asserted, adding that while "success is still possible", it requires difficult conversations around "the need to fill partnership skillset gaps, tackle financing shortfalls, and address data deficiencies".

Infectious diseases & NTDs

Plos NTDs (Editorial)- [Female genital schistosomiasis and HIV/AIDS: Reversing the neglect of girls and women](#)

“Peter J. Hotez and colleagues argue that female genital schistosomiasis is likely the most neglected gynaecologic condition and HIV/AIDS cofactor across sub-Saharan Africa and explain the opportunity to prevent new HIV/AIDS infections through highly cost-effective schistosomiasis control and elimination in Africa. “

AMR

Science - [The challenge of antimicrobial resistance: What economics can contribute](#)

“The accelerating tide of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a major worldwide policy concern. Like climate change, the incentives for individual decision-makers do not take into account the costs to society at large. AMR represents an impending “tragedy of the commons,” and there is an immediate need for collective action to prevent future harm. Roope et al. review the issues associated with AMR from an economics perspective and draw parallels with climate change. A major stumbling block for both challenges is to build consensus about the best way forward when faced with many uncertainties and inequities.” “...Drawing on economic concepts such as externalities and the principal–agent relationship, we suggest how economics can help to solve the challenges arising from increasing resistance to antibiotics. We discuss solutions to the key economic issues, from incentivizing the development of effective new antibiotics to improving antibiotic stewardship through financial mechanisms and regulation.”

A Mysterious Infection, Spanning the Globe in a Climate of Secrecy

The rise of *Candida Auris* embodies a serious and growing public health threat: drug-resistant germs.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/health/drug-resistant-candida-auris.html>

*“The man at Mount Sinai died after 90 days in the hospital, but *C. auris* did not. Tests showed it was everywhere in his room, so invasive that the hospital needed special cleaning equipment and had to rip out some of the ceiling and floor tiles to eradicate it.*

C. auris is so tenacious, in part, because it is impervious to major antifungal medications, making it a new example of one of the world's most intractable health threats: the rise of drug-resistant infections."

For the ones who want to read more on the germ Candida Auris and drug-resistant infections:

[Candida Auris: The Fungus Nobody Wants to Talk About](#)

[Culture of Secrecy Shields Hospitals with Outbreaks of Drug-Resistant Infections](#)

NCDs

Corporate interests within transnational advocacy networks: The International Coalition Against Plain Packaging

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/glob.12235#accessDenialLayout>

Smith & Lee present a case study of the **International Coalition Against Plain Packaging**, which is conceptualized as a transnational advocacy network, and documents its links to the tobacco industry. They found that tobacco companies not only provide network members, financial resources but also involved in producing the information used by the network to debate the benefits of plain packaging.

Using Policy Levers to Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption

<https://www.healthpolicy-watch.org/using-policy-levers-to-reduce-sugary-drink-consumption/>

"The global health organisation [Vital Strategies](#) has become a leading actor in the worldwide battle against obesity, which affects 2 billion people globally. Building on its tradition of working to cut tobacco consumption and traffic injuries, the organisation tackled sugary drink consumption as a flagship issue for policy change. ..." "...Health Policy Watch recently spoke with Sandra Mullin, Senior Vice President of Vital Strategies for Policy, Advocacy and Communications, about Vital Strategies' worldwide outreach on sugary drinks marketing and consumption...."

Task Force on Fiscal Policy for Health

<https://www.bloomberg.org/program/public-health/task-force-fiscal-policy-health/#overview>

“In April 2019, the Task Force on Fiscal Policy for Health released the [“Health Taxes to Save Lives”](#) report, calling on all countries to significantly raise their excise taxes on tobacco, alcohol and sugary beverages. An analysis conducted for the Task Force estimated that over 50 million premature deaths could be prevented if countries implemented excise tax increases large enough to raise product prices of tobacco, alcohol and sugary beverages by 50 percent over the next 50 years. The Task Force-commissioned analysis found that the impact of these taxes, projected to yield over US\$20 trillion in revenue, would be highest in low- and middle-income countries, where consumption and associated healthcare costs and productivity losses are growing.”

Sexual & Reproductive / maternal, neonatal & child health

More than four in 10 women, live in fear of refusing partner’s sexual demands, new UN global study finds

UNFPA Study: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036431>

“More than four in 10 women in 51 countries surveyed, feel they have no choice but to agree to their partner’s sexual demands, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency, [UNFPA](#), said on Wednesday, noting that they are also unable to make basic decisions about getting pregnant and accessing health care for themselves. “

“Monica Ferro, Director of [UNFPA](#) Geneva, said the figures were “worrisome” and it was essential to raise the level of consent and access to vital health services, for millions of women around the world. “Don’t forget: each one of these numbers is a person”, she added. “

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/09/penny-mordaunt-says-uk-will-defend-abortion-rights-amid-global-pushback-trump>

[World Politics Review](#): The U.S. tries, and fails, to dilute a global agreement on Women's Rights "...This year's [United Nations Commission on the Status of Women] meeting, which included a record number of attendees, was focused on social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure to advance gender equality. But innocuous as that agenda may sound, the forum was marred by contentious negotiations, particularly over the use of words like 'gender,' 'family,' and 'reproductive rights' in the commission's final outcome document, says Rachel Vogelstein, director of the Women and Foreign Policy Program at the Council on Foreign Relations. ... But this year, she notes, 'the United States expressed concern about reaffirming the Beijing Declaration.' ... [Vogelstein added,] 'Although the United States did not prevail in its campaign to backtrack on prior international agreements at the commission, its leadership of a growing opposition to prior international agreements on women's human rights is an ominous sign for the future'" (Waldman, 4/8)."

Paul Kagame orders release of women and girls jailed over abortion in Rwanda

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/apr/05/paul-kagame-orders-release-of-women-and-girls-jailed-over-abortion-in-rwanda>

“Pursuant to the powers conferred upon him by the laws ... the president of the republic informed the cabinet meeting that he has exercised his prerogative of mercy and pardoned 367 persons convicted for the offences of abortion, complicity in abortion and infanticide,” read a statement published after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, when the decision was approved.

“The government has proven once again that Rwanda is a cradle of women’s rights,” said Athanase Rukundo, director of programmes at Health Development Initiative, a human rights organisation... It is a positive step, taken to realize the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls in Rwanda”

Lancet (Comment) - Local trends in immunization coverage across Africa

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30702-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30702-0/fulltext)

Comment accompanying a new [study](#) in the Lancet that estimates diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus (DPT) vaccine coverage across the African continent at highly localised scales.

[Associated Press](#): U.N. population fund chief laments U.S. funding cut
"The U.N. population agency chief says she regrets the U.S. government's decision to cut funding for programs that help ensure safe pregnancies worldwide. The United States used to provide about \$70 million per year toward UNFPA programs to protect the health and lives of women and girls in developing countries. More than half of those funds were used for 'life-saving humanitarian programs,' said Dr. Natalia Kanem, the agency's executive director. The Trump administration announced in 2017 it was cutting all funding to the agency. The move was seen as a gesture to American conservatives and anti-abortion activists, though UNFPA doesn't provide abortions..." (4/10).

[Devex](#): Minority groups excluded from global progress on SRHR, UNFPA report says
"Despite global gains in securing sexual and reproductive rights over the past 50 years, many population groups are still left behind, according to a [report](#) released Wednesday by the United Nations Population Fund. The 'State of World Population 2019' report shows that global fertility rates have roughly halved since the agency began operations in 1969. But it also highlights how reproductive rights remain inaccessible to many, including more than 200 million women worldwide who want to prevent a pregnancy but don't have access to contraceptives. 'The lack of this power -- which influences so many other facets of life, from education to income to safety -- leaves women

unable to shape their own futures,' UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem said in a [press release](#)..." (Jerving, 4/10).

Access to medicines

<https://www.cgdev.org/publication/can-transparency-lower-prices-and-improve-access-pharmaceuticals-it-depends>

Is price transparency really the answer to healthcare systems' fiscal sustainability challenges as they strive to expand access to new technologies or even merely sustain provision within strained public budgets? Well, it depends!

A [recent review](#) of the impact of price transparency on prices and access—an input for CGD's [Working Group on the Future of Global Health Procurement](#) - reveals a complex picture and recommends possible solutions for on-patent and off-patent pharma products. The Working group identified 5 critical questions that need to be paid attention to, and highlights a common misunderstanding of confusing purchasing power with transparent pricing.

Human resources for health

Community Health Workers and Volunteers: The Most Effective Path to UHC

https://www.globalhealthnow.org/2019-04/community-health-workers-and-volunteers-most-effective-path-uhc?utm_source=Global+Health+NOW+Main+List&utm_campaign=6f9bf1aee5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_04_04_09_45&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8d0d062dbd-6f9bf1aee5-858767

“Paid or volunteer? Community health workers are on the frontlines in many countries—and vital to achieving universal health coverage. Yet the public health community has not reached a consensus on which model is the best.

.. Based on our experiences in rural Peru and Ethiopia, it's not either-or. It's both.

.. While paid health workers can do the “heavy lifting” in providing a comprehensive package of services, the volunteers can provide limited, but valuable, preventive and promotional services, such as home visits to vulnerable families or facilitating peer support groups of nursing or pregnant women.”

Emerging Voices

EV Governance Board Meeting in Dubai, 8-10 April

[@ev4gh](#): First day EV governance meeting discussions focused on governance issues (duh), EV taskforces, EV 2020 (including host DR Emmanuel showing us around in the MBR school), budget & fundraising. Still on the menu tonight: checking out the (light rail) subway (& shish kebab, we hope:))

[@ev4gh](#): Second day EV governance workshop coming up. With among others, discussions on medium term strategy, analysis of feedback 2018 venture, and break-out sessions for the different EV 2020 task forces.

Research

World Bank Policy Research Working Paper

Wagstaff et al. [Out of Pocket Expenditure on Health: A Global Stocktake](#)

“The paper presents estimates for 146 countries from all World Bank income groups for all summary measures, along with correlations between the summary measures and macroeconomic and health system indicators. Large differences emerge across countries in per capita out-of-pocket expenditures in 2011 international dollars, driven in large part by differences in per capita income and the share of gross domestic product spent on health.

.. Out-of-pocket expenditures tend to be regressive and catastrophic expenditures tend to be concentrated among the poor when expenditures are assessed relative to income, while expenditures tend to be progressive and catastrophic expenditures tend to be concentrated among the rich when expenditures are assessed relative to consumption. At the extreme poverty line of \$1.90-a-day, most impoverishment due to out-of-pocket expenditures occurs among low-income countries.”