IHP news 551: Mid-December flurry

(13 December 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 we all need some positive news from time to time (and especially many Brits this morning😊), I very much encourage you to read this week’s Featured article by Dirk van Duppen, co-author of the book “The Super-cooperator”. I’ll naturally also keep it very short in the intro – see the first line.

This week’s issue will zoom in, among others, on UHC Day (12 Dec), the second week of CoP25 in Madrid, International Human Rights Day (10 Dec) and a global WHO meeting to accelerate progress on NCDs & mental health in Muscat, Oman. Among others, the final report of the Independent High-Level Commission on NCDs came up with a rather innovative interpretation of the term “bold recommendations”. Coincidentally, “pour la petite histoire”, the sultan of Oman is currently “occupying” a hotel in Leuven, Belgium, with his entourage (and for two months), to get medical treatment at the university clinic here. We wish him all the best.

Meanwhile, Kagame’s Rwanda, always at the forefront of innovation, added another element to the humanitarian “triple nexus” (i.e. between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding aid sectors), throwing international football in the mix. After Arsenal, it’s now the turn of PSG, another poor club from Paris, to get some sponsoring from Rwanda. The new British prime minister (who seems keen on ever more “win-wins” by bringing DFID under the Foreign Office, “taking back control” so to speak) might want to have a chat with his Rwandan counterpart one of these days, to get some inspiration for the brave new times ahead in ‘international development’.

It’s also the usual end-of-the-year flurry for many, with plenty of new reports (like the 2019 Human Development Report), conferences on Nipah and NTDs, a new TB action plan, and what more.

Enjoy your reading.

Kristof Decoster
Antisocial economic structure and prosocial human nature

Dirk van Duppen

GP and co-author of « De Supersamenwerker” (The Supercooperator); Group Practice “Doctors for the People”, St Rochusstraat 57–59, B-2100 Deurne, Belgium

The alienation that arises from the conflict between the social nature of man on the one hand, and the anti-social goals of the neoliberal economic system on the other, makes people mentally and physically sick. This is demonstrated by a large amount of scientific evidence from the last ten years.

Shortly after the outbreak of the great recession in 2008, British epidemiologists Wilkinson and Pickett published "The Spirit Level - Why Equality Is Better For Everyone". It was a book that placed the theme of inequality high on the public and political agenda.

An unequal society goes hand in hand with lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, more mental health problems, higher drug use and more obesity. Unequal societies are also confronted with more violence, they relatively more often detain people in prison, have a lower level of mutual trust and a weaker community life. Unequal societies have a lower level of child welfare, poorer educational performance, more teenage pregnancies and lower social mobility.

A high degree of inequality therefore makes a society sick and this in all segments. Not only the poor are the victims: all social layers of the population suffer from a high degree of inequality.

Wilkinson and Pickett’s thesis that larger income differences cause a whole series of health and social problems (and not vice versa), is based on a synthesis of some 400 empirical studies, resulting from decades of scientific research, published in international peer reviewed journals.

In their latest book "The Inner Level" (2018), Wilkinson and Pickett dig further to come to a better understanding of the causal relationships. Based on a new range of empirical evidence, 200 studies published in international peer reviewed journals over the past ten years, the authors analyze why inequality leads to poor health and “un”-wellbeing. The authors see the explanation for our great sensitivity to (more) inequality in its psychic effects. They identify the phenomenon of fear of status (‘status anxiety’) and the resulting stress as the main culprit. Fear of status has a decisive influence on how we think and feel, how we behave and relate to each other and thus translates into a high degree of discomfort and unhealthiness. The social relationships that are imposed on us today by the neoliberal economic system are fundamentally focused on mutual competition for a place in the pecking order and, as a result, clash with the essentially social nature of man, say Wilkinson and Pickett. It is precisely with respect to that view of human nature that we are experiencing a revolution in science just now. The empirical scientific evidence that man naturally has a tendency to empathy, egalitarianism, altruism and cooperation is growing year after year.

For centuries there has been a debate among philosophers as to whether man is by nature rather inherently good (prosocial), but capable of evil; or that he is inherently evil (antisocial), but capable
of good. Recent research in many disciplines such as neuroscience, evolutionary child psychology, paleo-anthropology, evolutionary dynamics, behavioral economics and epidemiology, provides overwhelming evidence that humans are primarily prosocial by nature. It is the social circumstances that determine whether this solidarity side of human nature or the evolutionary older instincts such as competition, aggression and dominance prevail.

Of all mammals, a human (baby) is the most premature at birth, vulnerable, dependent and in need of help. He can only survive and reproduce thanks to the care of others. As a result, the Homo sapiens evolved mainly through natural and sexual selection for prosocial behavior. Of all mammals, Homo sapiens has the longest childhood, in which the human child depends on its parents and on the community. Compared to the other primates, humans have a long-term joint upbringing. For example, the African saying goes "You must be two to father a child, but you need an entire village to raise it." Moreover, there is a causal relationship, via the path of social learning, between these prosocial characteristics and human intelligence. The latter is the most successful trait in Darwinian evolution and the basis of man's unique competence for a cumulative cultural evolution. The Homo sapiens can become a Homo supersapiens if the Homo socialis can flourish in him. Darwin’s "survival of the fittest" becomes "The survival of the friendliest" with the Homo sapiens. Man is a super collaborator.

Few paradigm shifts are known, as is the case with this new view of mankind, supported by such a large amount of evidence that has materialized in such a short time and in so many different research areas at the same time (see for example here, here and here). "If the circumstances are so decisive for humans," Nobel Prize winner José Saramago wrote, let us make those circumstances more human."

You find more references in the book by Van Duppen & Hoebeke, De supersamenwerker

Highlights of the week

UHC Day (12 Dec) – Keep the promise

It’s obvious that we can’t include all great reads & blogs here. So we’ll just list some, a few others you find in the separate UHC section below. (and you know me, if a title features ‘harnessing’ or ‘leveraging’ there’s also a fairly good chance that you end up in the UHC section below 😊).

UN News - Universal Health Coverage will ‘drive progress’ on 2030 Development Agenda


By way of example, UN SG Guterres’ message on UHC Day.
Dr. Tedros wrote an essay for BMJ - Healthcare for all: every country can do it. And WHO also featured another important message of him here - Keeping the promise to the women who will deliver universal health coverage.

WHO - Global Spending on Health: A World in Transition


“This 2019 report Global health spending: A world in transition examines how countries progress towards financing UHC in a world in transition.

The report’s key messages include: (1) It updates the upward trends in global health spending, confirming the increasing convergence of middle income countries towards high income countries’ health spending profiles, with increased domestic and public spending and the decreasing role of overseas development assistance. (2) The report highlights how most countries that experienced high rates of economic growth also undertook a health financing transition towards increasing the share of health spending funded publicly, while the transition from aid is slower. (3) The health financing transition is also accompanied by a transition of institutions with increased pooling and increased public financing. (4) And while there is more and more evidence on the levels of spending on PHC, more analysis is needed to understand how countries can ensure adequate financing for the primary health care priority.”

Lancet Global Health - A comprehensive assessment of universal health coverage in 111 countries: a retrospective observational study

Adam Wagstaff & Sven Neelsen; https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(19)30463-2/fulltext

The authors of this new study measure UHC achievement using an index that considers both service coverage and financial protection. Unlike previous attempts to measure UHC globally, which relied heavily on modelling, their index is almost exclusively based on household survey data. The analysis covers 111 countries. Do check out their findings, they’re quite interesting. How does your country do on this new index?

Read also a related Comment - Measurement matters: who and what counts on the road to universal health coverage (by Nancy Fullman et al)

Raising some important issues on measuring UHC – not just for methodologists.

BMJ Global Health Practice - Learning for Universal Health Coverage

B Meessen et al; https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/6/e002059

“The journey to universal health coverage (UHC) is full of challenges, which to a great extent are specific to each country. ‘Learning for UHC’ is a central component of countries’ health system strengthening agendas. Our group has been engaged for a decade in facilitating collective learning for UHC through a range of modalities at global, regional and national levels. We present some of
our experience and draw lessons for countries and international actors interested in strengthening national systemic learning capacities for UHC. The main lesson is that with appropriate collective intelligence processes, digital tools and facilitation capacities, countries and international agencies can mobilise the many actors with knowledge relevant to the design, implementation and evaluation of UHC policies. However, really building learning health systems will take more time and commitment. Each country will have to invest substantively in developing its specific learning systemic capacities, with an active programme of work addressing supportive leadership, organisational culture and knowledge management processes.”

Lancet Comment - Surviving or thriving in the Eastern Mediterranean region: the quest for universal health coverage during conflict


“... during times of conflict, reaching [UHC] is threatened because health-care use, availability, and affordability supersede issues of equity in access, quality, and financial protection. As international civil servants working with war-torn countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMR), we question every day the relevance of UHC in the context of conflicts. .... .... In time of war, UHC final goals and intermediary objectives should be reformulated. WHO and other partners have a major role in assisting countries in conflict to expand UHC by securing service provision, facilitating institution building, and coordinating national and international stakeholders. The EMR experience suggests that UHC final goals should focus on ensuring effective access to minimum or priority services with financial protection. .... “Health for All by All” is the slogan of the EMR Vision 2023. UHC is what we want for all countries in the region and is our first strategic priority. Barely half a year apart, the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2015 and the first World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 defined the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus (HDPNx) to bridge the gap between humanitarian response and long-term development. It is imperative for all governments and health partners in the region to ensure essential health services are available to all people living in countries in conflict, and to operationalise the HDPNx and work together to help rebuild the health systems in these countries as they embark on their way to recovery.”

ODI (Working & discussion paper) – Reaching universal health coverage: a political economy review of trends across 49 countries


“This paper aims to understand why and how countries provide health coverage, particularly to left-behind groups. To address these questions, we identified 49 geographically, economically and culturally diverse countries that have either achieved universal health coverage (UHC) or have made good progress towards it. This paper synthesises the existing literature and identifies global and regional trends underlying progress, as well as the enablers, strategies and constraints each country faced in trying to expand healthcare. While there is no single path to UHC, this paper identifies common trends. For instance, countries normally move to provide health coverage during the reconstruction that follows fragility, such as following a war, coup or economic crisis. Wealth appears to be far less important than government capacity in providing coverage (although poorer countries are more likely to struggle with capacity). Government-run health systems seem to perform better than privately financed alternatives (e.g. insurance models). Before UHC is achieved, health
reforms are often subject to contestation but once countries move towards universal coverage, this becomes stable and is unlikely to be reversed.”

WB 'Investing in Health' blog - Universal Health Coverage: Engage Civil Society and Communities to Keep the Promise


Blog by the Civil Society Engagement Mechanism Secretariat, hosted by Management Sciences for Health.

BMJ Opinion - We must change how we measure the impact of health spending on poor people if we are serious about “leaving no one behind”

S Thomson et al; BMJ blog;

Must-read. “...the WHO Regional Office for Europe has developed new metrics to measure financial protection—the protection health systems offer people against financial hardship caused by out-of-pocket payments. We have done so because of evidence that existing metrics used to monitor financial protection globally, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.8.2, are of limited relevance for developing policies to leave no one behind....” Read what the changed metrics involve. The rationale: “The metrics currently used to measure financial protection at global level fall short because they are not sufficiently sensitive to financial hardship among poor people.”

Globalization & Health - NGOs, austerity, and universal health coverage in Mozambique


Article from the political determinants supplement. “In many African countries, hundreds of health-related NGOs are fed by a chaotic tangle of donor funding streams. The case of Mozambique illustrates how this NGO model impedes Universal Health Coverage....”

HSG blog series on UHC Day

Check out for example, by Shakira Choonara (EV 2014 and part of the inaugural African Union Youth Advisory Council) - The powerful push for UHC. Among others, she is excited by the power of SRHR activists and communities and what this will bring to the UHC movement.
Sixth UHC2030 Steering Committee Meeting (10-11 Dec, Brussels)

https://www.uhc2030.org/news-events/uhc2030-events/sixth-uhc2030-steering-committee-meeting-555333/

“The UHC2030 Steering Committee met in Brussels for two days on 10 - 11 December 2019. The objectives of the meeting were to: 1. Celebrate and reflect on the outcomes of the UN High-Level Meeting on UHC; 2. Agree UHC2030’s post-HLM vision and contribution to translating commitments into action, focusing on: Political leadership to sustain the momentum; Accountability, especially for leaving no one behind; Moving together to ensure country impact; Multi-stakeholder engagement, global health architecture, strengthening coordination. 3. Agree next steps to deliver on this (funding, 2020 budget, 2020-21 workplan).”

Besides the agenda, you also find background papers here.

And a tweet from Ilona Kickbusch:

“The Steering Committee @UHC2030 was meeting in Brussels with a focus on #accountability -the strong civil society stakeholder group will be critical in this effort both globally and at country level. The key: very difficult to get funding for political accountability #UHCDay2019.”

Global WHO Meeting to accelerate progress on SDG target 3.4 on NCDs & Mental Health (Muscat, Oman 9-12 Dec)

The World Health Organization organized the Global Meeting to Accelerate Progress on SDG Target 3.4 on Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. The Meeting was hosted by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman from 9 to 12 December 2019 in Muscat. You find more info on the overall aims of the Meeting (with various parts, technical meeting, HL segment, multistakeholders Partners forum, … ) here: WHO.

WHO - WHO gets new advice on curbing deadly noncommunicable diseases


“World leaders and health experts, today, handed 8 recommendations to WHO’s Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, that could save millions of lives and promote mental health. The WHO Independent High-level Commission on noncommunicable diseases was convened by Dr Tedros in October 2017 … … The Commission highlighted that noncommunicable diseases still account for more than 70% of deaths and stressed that, “progress against NCDs and mental health conditions must be greatly accelerated if the 2030 Agenda is to succeed.” It also noted that many countries face challenges and need more support to implement solutions. The report laid out a set of 8 recommendations for WHO.....”
Check them out. We had some serious trouble to find the notion of ‘commercial determinants of health’ in them.

**HPW - Beat NCDs With Healthier Behaviours, Environments & Education, Says WHO High-Level Commission**


Great coverage of this final report, and the opening days of the Muscat forum.

“**Make the ‘healthiest choices the easiest choices’** to prevent many non-communicable diseases. This was a **key message** from an Independent High-Level Commission report on Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), released Tuesday at a WHO Global Meeting to Accelerate Progress NCDs and Mental Health in Muscat, Oman. The report, **‘It’s Time to Walk the Talk’**, released on the second day of a four-day meeting (9-12 December) is the final report in a series produced by the High-Level Commission, which was convened by WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in 2017. It **calls for WHO to lead the way in advocating for national government policies that create healthier environments and encourage healthier behaviours, which can prevent many chronic diseases – through measures such as stronger government taxes and regulatory measures. Promoting greater ‘health literacy’ about healthy choices individuals can make as well as incorporating NCD prevention and treatment fully into health systems** are other cornerstone recommendations of the new report....”

Check out also **Katie Dain’s official reaction to the report - Release of second WHO HLC Report on NCDs - Statement by Commissioner Katie Dain**

She’s cautiously positive about this report, in general, even if it could have gone further, but has a big issue with recommendation 6. “I was unable to support recommendation 6, which calls on WHO to create a new global platform to increase engagement with the private sector....” Read why.

You might also want to check out **reports from working groups of the second phase**: [https://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/](https://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/) (scroll to the bottom of the page)

**PS:** via the Health Finance Institute (HFI) ’s newsletter: “**This past summer, HFI was commissioned by the WHO High-Level Commission on NCDs to develop a business plan for the first ever global catalytic fund for NCDs. This included a scoping document, series of stakeholder consultations, and a structured review of development funds. The report was launched at the WHO Global Meeting to Accelerate Progress on SDG 3.4 in Oman. Click [here](https://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/) to view the outline business plan. ...”**

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**The UK Elections & NHS, DFID, global health ...**

By now, you know how the “Brexit/Christmas elections” have turned out. Some reads you might want to delve into:
BMJ - Is the NHS really “off the table” in post-Brexit talks with the US?
J Hanefeld & R Smith; https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6898

“No, the UK risks losing control over critical elements of NHS policy.” With two messages, among others.

CGD - UK Elections: What’s News on Global Health So Far?
K Chalkidou, A Glassman et al; https://www.cgdev.org/blog/uk-elections-whats-news-global-health-so-far#.XepggbjGJOs.twitter

“... we take a look at the [three main parties] manifestos’ mentions on official development assistance (ODA) and global health in the run-up to next week’s election. Global health is a major piece of UK development policy; over a quarter of the 0.7 percent of GDP committed to aid is health related, with $1.3 billion channelled via DFID and another $633m through multilaterals (2017 data). Earlier this year DFID committed £1.5 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, making DFID one of 3 largest contributors after the USA and France. We were interested to see how much the parties outline their commitments specifically on global health. While wonderful to see that most parties stuck to the 0.7 percent GDP for aid commitment, global health features in the manifestos, but not enough—especially given the well-known emerging global threats such as pandemic flu and antibiotic resistance, and the importance of global health in the UK development portfolio. Below, we outline the direct and indirect elements:...”

FT - Johnson plans Foreign Office takeover of international aid budget
FT;

Caused quite some commotion, as you can imagine. “Boris Johnson is planning to fold the U.K.’s Department for International Development into the Foreign Office if he wins this week’s election, as he tries to flesh out his promise to build a post-Brexit ‘global Britain.’”

See also Devex - DFID and FCO draw up plans for a potential merger

“Civil servants and Conservative politicians are said to be trying to convince Prime Minister Boris Johnson to protect DFID’s independence if the party wins a majority in Thursday’s election.”

Or the Telegraph - Warning over ‘deeply damaging’ merger between Foreign Office and DFID

International Human Rights Day (10 Dec)

Very important day, certainly in times like ours.
BMJ Global Health (Editorial) - Time to clarify State obligations and accountability on NCDs with human rights instruments

Kent Buse et al; https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/6/e002155

“...Rights-based national policies for prevention and control of NCDs can strengthen countries’ efforts to address the determinants of NCDs, particularly if they recognise the obligation of states to respect, protect and fulfil people’s right to healthy diets, including its responsibility to govern the commercial and social determinants of healthy diets, using legislative, regulatory and administrative measures at its disposal. Hence, we welcome the recent call made by 180 experts on WHO and OHCHR (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) to develop international guidance on human rights, healthy diets and sustainable food systems. A PUBLIC call [Kent goes Rob here 😊] is garnering additional signatories to the initiative. Thirty years after WHO and the (then) United Nations Centre for Human Rights organised the first international consultation to discuss HIV and human rights, we think that it is time for similar consultations on rights, NCDs and healthy diets at country, regional, global levels, so as to enable wider engagement of affected communities and civil society organisations, including consumer protection groups. We would encourage civil society organisations, such as the NCD Alliance, to lead such efforts in collaboration with relevant UN and other organisations…”

HHR Viewpoint – The Right to Health: Then, Now and a Call to Arms

A Chapman; https://www.hhrjournal.org/2019/12/the-right-to-health-then-now-and-a-call-to-arms/

Quote: “...So how can right to health advocates counter these [dire] trends [for human rights & broader]? I believe that directly challenging the assumptions and key ideological premises of neoliberalism that have contributed to these outcomes is key to doing so. To that extent, I agree with some of the critics of human rights like Samuel Moyn who have taken the human rights community to task for not opposing neoliberalism more forthrightly…”


HHR (December issue)


The new Issue features: a Special Section on Abortion in the Middle East and North Africa; a Special Section on Abortion Law Reform & a Special Section on Human Rights for Health across the United Nations.

As for the latter, start with the Editorial – Human Rights for Health across the United Nations (by B M Meier & L Gostin)

And some quick links, related one way or another to (aspects of) Human Rights Day:
Daily Maverick - Why multinationals should pay their fair share of taxes By M Sepulveda

PS: Magdalena Sepúlveda is Executive Director of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT). From 2008 to 2014 she was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

“If multinationals — and the super-rich — do not pay their fair share of taxes, governments cannot invest in providing services to citizens and they won’t be able to adapt to the climate crisis.”

Cordaid with a call to action to tackle the shrinking space for civil society – “On International Human Rights Day, Cordaid calls for a renewed commitment to protect and increase the operational space for civil society across the globe. Without strong, dynamic and effective civil society organizations (CSOs), we cannot uphold human rights. In fact, without them, we cannot achieve the world’s 2030 sustainable development agenda.”

UN Environment - Clean air as a human right

On the implications of recognizing a healthy environment as a human right.

TB

HPW - Stop TB Partnership Launches New Global Plan, World’s Largest Funding Call For TB Grassroots Organizations, & Pediatric DR-TB Initiative


“A new plan to dramatically accelerate global efforts to end tuberculosis, one of the world’s deadliest and oldest known infectious diseases, was launched Tuesday by the Stop TB Partnership in Jakarta. The fully-costed plan is based on commitments made at a 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on Ending TB (UNHLM) to reduce TB deaths by 1.5 million people by 2022. Two other initiatives – one to mobilize civil society support and another to launch a new regimen for treating drug-resistant TB in Indonesian children – were launched in tandem to increase efforts towards. ... According to the roadmap, funding for TB prevention, care, and R&D must be rapidly scaled up in order to reach global targets for reducing TB in line with 2022. Currently, funding for TB treatment and prevention stands at less than US $7 billion per annum; that must be doubled to at least US $14 billion per annum. R&D funding must be nearly tripled to over US $2.16 billion per annum.”

See also Cidrap - Reports: Tuberculosis R&D funding still falling short

“Global funding for tuberculosis research and development (TB R&D) has reached an all-time high, but funding goals for efforts to eliminate the disease remain far out of reach, according to two reports released today. In an analysis of TB research funding trends from 2005 through 2018, the Treatment Action Group (TAG) found that global funding for TB R&D totaled $916 million US for fiscal year 2018, an increase of $134 million US from 2017. But the Stop TB Partnership’s (STBP’s) updated Global Plan to End TB calls for $2.6 billion US per year for R&D of new diagnostics, new
drugs, and a new vaccine. That's in addition to $13 billion US a year needed for TB prevention and care, the group says…."

- And The Telegraph - [Up to $15bn a year needed to control TB as world urged to 'mobilise' against the disease](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/2019/12/02/ebola-outbreak-unites-world-against-tuberculosis/)

"The world needs to apply the same urgency to tuberculosis as it did to Ebola if it is to wipe out the deadly lung disease, a leading TB expert has said. At the launch of a global plan setting out how to eliminate the world’s biggest infectious killer TB scientists and campaigners have called for more than $15 billion a year between now and 2022. Some $2.6 billion a year is needed for research and development and $13bn is needed for care and treatment of people with the disease, which infected 10 million people in 2018 and killed 1.5 million - figures that have barely shifted over the last few years. If the plan is fully funded this would mean that 40 million people would get on TB treatment…."

And a link: WHO (Dec ’19) - [Rapid Communication: key changes to the treatment of drug-resistant TB](https://www.who.int/tb/publications/trb-drugresistance-2019/)

**Global Tax Justice**

**Foreign Affairs - The Starving State**

[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-12-10/starving-state](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-12-10/starving-state)

J Stiglitz, T Tucker & G Zucman call for a New Deal on international taxation “to rein in the nefarious influence that the Top 1% are having on our economies/democracies”. (cfr a tweet from Tucker)

**Tax Justice Network - Global taxing rights: ‘The genie is out of the bottle’**


By Alex Cobham. Round up this week’s #GlobalTaxRights conference. Check out the four points of consensus.


Coverage, for example in UN News: Inequality threatening human development, new global UN report warns

“Despite global progress in tackling poverty, hunger and disease, a “new generation of inequalities” indicates that many societies are not working as they should, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) argues in its latest report released on Monday. The 2019 Human Development Report (HDR) states that just as the gap in basic living standards is narrowing for millions of people, inequalities surrounding education, and around technology and climate change, have sparked demonstrations across the globe. Left unchecked, they could trigger a ‘new great divergence’ in society of the kind not seen since the Industrial Revolution, according to the report.”

Make sure you also check out this Comment (in the book) from Ben Phillips: Being right is not enough: Reducing inequality needs a movement from below.

Other coverage in Devex: A 'new generation of inequalities' requires sharper measurement, UNDP chief says

“Many countries have made headway on income, health, and livelihood since 1990, but these averages offer only a fragmented picture of development. The causes of inequality have evolved, and the way development progress is measured must follow suit, a new United Nations Development Programme report says. Measures of inequality must go beyond income and country averages, the "2019 Human Development Report" findings say. Climate change, technology, and other factors will continue to drive the biggest divisions across society, in what UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner described during a media briefing as a “seismic shift” in how development should be measured....”

Global Health Governance

Devex - What will Mark Suzman bring to new role as CEO of Gates Foundation?

He certainly started on a nice note, managing to get Horton cranky, while not even having started 😊 (see below - tweets).

“On Thursday, Sue Desmond-Hellmann, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, announced she will step down early next year. Her successor, Gates' Chief Strategy Officer Mark Suzman, has the potential to further expand the foundation’s global influence, several development professionals told Devex following the announcement....”

Aidspan - The Global Fund should leverage public accountability institutions in francophone Africa
http://www.aidspan.org/node/5110
“Several institutions within francophone African countries, namely the Court of Accounts, the General Inspectorate of the State, and the Inspectorate of Health, have a mandate to control and audit resources related to health. Currently, none of them is involved with Global Fund grants. This is a missed opportunity as these in-country accountability institutions with their mandate, legal power, knowledge of local context can help improve the grants accountability, sustainability and country ownership.”

Article from the new GFO issue.

Open Democracy - Are INGOs ready to give up power?
Deborah Doane; https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/are-INGOs-ready-give-power/

One of the reads of the week. “Southern organisations need to find ways to take power, rather than wait for it to be ‘shifted’ to them.”

Do check out also the #ShiftthePower (draft) Manifesto  (scroll to the bottom)

Tribune India – The dangers of keeping the gates wide open

Analysis of the (again cozy) relationship between Modi & Gates (after some hiccups a while ago). Went viral this weekend.

Watch the GAP! A critical civil society perspective on the “Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All”
https://www.medicusmundi.org/watch-the-gap/

In Kampala, civil society launched a ‘Watch the GAP’ taskforce.

CGD (briefing) - Mind the Gaps: Takeaways from Emerging Research and Policy Implications for Aid Transition in Health and Development

Must-read. “… Earlier this year, the Center for Global Development (CGD) convened a workshop with leading experts from multilateral and bilateral institutions, government departments and agencies, research organizations, and NGOs to discuss findings from recent research on upcoming aid transitions in middle-income countries. The group also considered the policy implications for sustained health and development impact, public financing, fiscal management, and aid eligibility policies and their implementation. This workshop—the first in a series of meetings—closely relates
to CGD’s ongoing research exploring transitions in global health financing. Below, we summarize seven key takeaways that emerged from the workshop discussions.”

ODI (report) - Moving away from aid: lessons from country studies

« This report synthesises the experiences of four countries – Botswana, Chile, Mexico and the Republic of Korea – in the transition from aid and graduation from official development assistance (ODA). It presents research on the management of the transition from aid, cooperation with development partners when aid falls and bi- and multilateral cooperation as countries approach ODA graduation. … … A set of lessons, informed by the country studies, are outlined that are intended to be useful for other countries entering or progressing along the path towards ODA graduation, as well as for development partners to sustain outcomes and renew partnerships. This report forms part of a larger project that sets out to investigate country experiences of and key lessons from the transition and graduation from ODA. … »

Devex – New effort launches to create DFI transparency framework

“Many development finance institutions have come under increased scrutiny in recent years, criticized for their lack of transparency as they invest more money and gain prominence. What’s clear is that each DFI seems to share different types of data in a variety of ways, according to a Devex analysis, and many don’t publicly share information about their investment process or how they determine impacts. To address this challenge, Publish What You Fund, an organization focused on aid and development transparency, is launching the DFI Transparency Initiative, which aims to create an actionable framework that DFIs can use to better share information publicly…. ”

COP 25 (Madrid) – week 2

I’m sure you’ve had your share of COP 25 news via media this week. If not, check Climate Change news.

Some links:

- Climate change news - Largest countries silent as world seeks action on climate

(analysis as of Thursday morning) “Push to gain new commitments from large polluters largely fails as hopes for climate ambition at Cop25 narrow to a single line of text.” As diplomats scramble to finalise the rules of the Paris Agreement at the UN climate talks, the world awaits a concrete sign of countries’ readiness to boost climate action. If that arrives, it will be in the form of a legalistic ‘decision’ on ‘ambition’ approved by all nations as the Cop25 talks close in Madrid....”
Update (Friday morning) via Devex: “Climate negotiators are in a race to the finish line at COP25 in Madrid. The United Nations climate summit is supposed to conclude on Friday, but a few key issues threaten to send the conference into overtime. One of the most contentious topics revolves around the rules that will govern carbon markets under the Paris Agreement — known as Article 6 in the negotiating text. … As they have for years, delegates continue to spar over the issue of “loss and damage,” which acknowledges that since climate change is already occurring, some harm is unavoidable — and indeed already materializing. The big question is whether the conversation on loss and damage should result in concrete financing commitments to countries that experience harm, a proposal that the U.S. delegation, in particular, has sought to block. While protests inside the venue — and a forceful response by security personnel — grabbed headlines, major development institutions continued to grapple with how to align their current mandates with the urgent demands of the Paris Agreement. … For many of the institutions involved in climate finance, one of the most pressing questions is whether they can move from working on projects to working in broad collaboration toward the rapid decarbonization of the global economy.”

BBC - Greta Thunberg accuses world leaders of 'creative PR’ at climate summit

As usual, Greta was spot on. Let’s hope the ambitious (though perhaps still not ambitious enough) new Green Deal in Europe doesn’t belong to this category of ‘creative PR’. We’ll find out soon.

See the Guardian - European Green Deal will change economy to solve climate crisis, says EU. At the very least, the new European tack offers a glimmer of hope. See also (Guardian) - EU aims to stir global action with pledge on climate crisis.

Eco-business - Declare climate emergency, say scientists

“Putting together the many climate studies published in 2019, scientists tell the UN that the world is very close to tipping points.” Check out the 10 insights of the super-summary (by J Rockström et al)

See also Future Earth - 10 New Insights in Climate Science 2019

“The 10 New Insights in Climate Science 2019 intends to take up the latest and most essential scientific findings published in an extraordinary year – the climate science year in review.”

Among others: (1) The world is not on track; (2) Climate change is faster and stronger than expected; (9) Equity and equality are pivotal to successful climate change mitigation and adaptation; (10) The time may have come for social tipping points on climate change.

As you can imagine, the last one gives perhaps the most hope.

Guardian - UN climate talks failing to address urgency of crisis, says top scientist

“COP25 in Madrid criticised for focusing on details instead of agreeing deep cuts to emissions.” (by J Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.)
Check out how your countries are doing on the **Climate change performance index 2020** – The index is an “independent monitoring tool of countries’ climate protection performance. It aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics and enables the comparability of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries.”

Some interesting rankings in there (with India pretty high, for example).

**Devex** - **Climate finance calls grow louder in face of global emergency**

“The final month of 2019 marks an inflection point for negotiators at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Madrid this week, with the hottest decade in recorded history now coming to an end, and the first decade of the Paris climate agreement about to begin. The fundamental issue at COP25 is ambition. Governments have to commit to more aggressive national climate action plans that reflect the urgency of the climate crisis before the Paris Agreement takes hold in 2020, while the international community is under mounting pressure to deliver enough financial and technical support — particularly to low-income countries — to give those plans a realistic chance of implementation....”

**Other Planetary health news & publications**

**Lancet Viewpoint** - Should health professionals participate in civil disobedience in response to the climate change health emergency?

H Bennett et al; [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32985-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32985-X/fulltext)

“...In this Viewpoint, we apply a framework to guide decision making by considering whether climate change justifies civil disobedience by health professionals as part of our duty of care. The framework comes from a western ethics paradigm, and we acknowledge that many people who relate to this paradigm are relatively protected from early climate–health effects. This protection is not the case for many other people, especially those in climate-vulnerable countries and Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, the framework includes principles that are common currency for health professionals....”

A key criterion (6) that struck my attention: **“Any obligation to participate is greater for health professionals whose personal, professional, and sociopolitical circumstances mean that they and those they love and care for are at lesser risk of substantial harm from such actions.”**

**Climate change news** - We really may have just 11 years to save the climate

**Thomas Hale** (Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford); [https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/12/06/really-might-11-years-save-climate/](https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/12/06/really-might-11-years-save-climate/)

A political science view on the ‘11 years left’. “**As the crisis becomes dominated by urgent survival needs, the political window to prevent further climate change will close.**” Recommended read.
CNN - Climate change could wipe $2.3 trillion off global stocks

Another glimmer of hope: the increasing anxiety in global financial (and corporate) circles about the impact of climate change on stocks etc. “Policies designed to combat climate change could permanently slash the value of companies around the world by up to $2.3 trillion. That’s according to a new report from Principles for Responsible Investment that examines how "inevitable" policies such as banning internal combustion engines will affect stock prices...”

Guardian - Reach 'peak meat' by 2030 to tackle climate crisis, say scientists

“Livestock production needs to reach its peak within the next decade in order to tackle the climate emergency, scientists have warned. They are calling for governments in all but the poorest countries to set a date for “peak meat” because animal agriculture is a significant and fast-growing source of global greenhouse gas emissions. Cattle and sheep emit large amounts of methane while forests are destroyed to create pasture and grow the grains that are fed to intensively reared animals...”

For the Lancet Planetary Health letter (on which this Guardian article is based), see Scientists call for renewed Paris pledges to transform agriculture.

Vox – Scientists feared unstoppable emissions from melting permafrost. They may have already started.

“The Arctic is a ticking time bomb that’s close to going off.”

Rise in global homelessness

Thomson Reuters Foundation - Film star Helen Mirren decries 'disturbing' global rise in homelessness
http://news.trust.org/item/20191207222936-06a48/

“Oscar-winning British actor Helen Mirren has hit out against the “exponential rise in homelessness” as she prepared to sleep out in central London on Saturday as part of a global charity appeal to fight the scourge. Mirren joined Hollywood stars Will Smith and Brian Cox and an estimated 50,000 people in the "World’s Big Sleep Out" event, which takes place in more than 50 cities from New York to Delhi and raises funds for homeless causes. "What’s disturbing, profoundly, to me is the exponential rise in homelessness that I’ve noticed ... in every city in Los Angeles, in New York, in London," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation....”
Other NCD news & publications

We flag here first some new articles in the BMJ Collection - Solutions for non-communicable disease prevention and control

BMJ Analysis - One size does not fit all: implementation of interventions for non-communicable diseases

https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6434

“Implementation of evidence based interventions for non-communicable diseases is slow in many countries, and João Breda and colleagues call for more support to help them adapt the recommendations to their local context.”

BMJ Analysis - Prioritising action on alcohol for health and development

https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6162

“Despite the existence of cost effective interventions to reduce harmful use of alcohol, many countries are not giving it the attention it deserves, say Dag Rekve and colleagues.”

BMJ blog - A “whole of society” approach to non-communicable diseases must include civil society organisations

“The responses to HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and climate change provide examples for civil society engagement in NCDs, says Katie Dain (NCD Alliance).”

Scidev.net – Q&A: Africa lacks chronic disease policies - WHO’s Tedros

https://www.scidev.net/global/health/opinion/q-a-african-region-lacks-ncd-policies-who-s-tedros.html

“There is a lack of strategies to tackle chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease in the African region, posing a key challenge for those working to improve healthcare on the continent, according to WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus....” The problem will impact socioeconomic development; Universal health coverage is needed to prevent NCDs from developing.


Katie Dain; https://www.healthpolicy-watch.org/better-health-better-lives-norway-launches-the-worlds-first-development-strategy-on-ncds/
Katie Dain (NCD Alliance), who attended the launch on 22 November, comes back on Norway’s (first international) development strategy on NCDs. **Why is this such a big deal and what are the broader implications?** Well worth a read.

**AMR**

**Linkedin - Why after five years, I’m changing how I talk about antibiotic resistance**


“This week five years ago, one global health story made headlines around the world. ‘Superbugs to claim 10 million lives each year by 2050’ … The trigger for this coverage was the first report from an independent policy review on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) commissioned by then UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, and supported by Wellcome. I was then part of the small team working to publish and promote the report. We faced an immediate challenge when we began our work: our Chair, Jim O’Neill, had been asked to advocate for action on drug-resistant infections, and yet no-one could place a figure on their global impact, either today or in the future. So, working with modelling experts, we did some rapid work to try and get an answer. …” The numbers did manage to change the global discourse on drug resistance.

However, as it’s becoming increasingly clear that apocalyptic visions don’t engage the public, “…five years on, it’s time to be frank and say these figures (and the graphics which helped them achieve widespread prominence) have served their purpose. They helped catch the imagination of policymakers and will continue to be the basis of the case for action. But as we look ahead to 2020, and continued efforts to tackle drug resistance and to get people more engaged with the topic, I’m making a resolution: to put these apocalyptic visions into retirement and look to new, more relatable ways to talk about drug-resistant infections. If we want to generate lasting change rather than just catchy headlines, we need to do better…”.

- However, apparently Jim O’Neill himself didn’t get the message yet – see a still rather apocalyptically framed piece in [Project Syndicate - Where Is the AMR Rebellion?](https://www.project-syndicate.org commentary-jeremy-knox-2019-01)

“With extreme weather events becoming more frequent and young climate activists keeping the pressure on governments, policymakers and business leaders have finally begun to focus on the threat of climate change. The growing threat to human wellbeing posed by antimicrobial resistance merits a similar level of attention.”

**BMJ Editorial - Tackling antimicrobial resistance in low-income and middle-income countries**

S Pokharel et al; [https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/6/e002104](https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/6/e002104)
“...In this editorial, we draw insight from some recent papers in BMJ Global Health on AMR, and we use the PESTELI framework to highlight the multifaceted challenges involved in tackling AMR in low-income and middle-income countries, and the need for a holistic and multisectoral approach....”

Nature - New antibiotics target the outer membrane of bacteria

Nature news;

“A double membrane protects certain bacteria from antibiotics, but compounds have now been generated that can overcome this obstacle, seemingly by targeting a crucial protein in the outer membrane.”

Global Health Security

WB – The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Receives Support to Strengthen Continental and Regional Infectious-Disease Detection and Response Systems

WB;

“The World Bank provides $250 million to Ethiopia, Zambia, and the African Union to combat epidemics and advance critical public health priorities.”

“The Board of the World Bank Group has approved a total of $250 million in International Development Association (IDA) credits and grants to help the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, the Republic of Zambia, and the African Union (AU) counter the spread of infectious diseases and address key regional and continental public health issues. ... The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Regional Investment Financing Project (ACDCP) will strengthen disease surveillance, prevention, and emergency-response systems across the African continent. ...”

Journal of Public Health Policy - Financing global health emergency response: outbreaks, not agencies


“Effectively responding to global health emergencies requires substantial financial commitment from many stakeholders, including governments, multilateral agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. A major current policy challenge needs attention: how to better coordinate investment among actors aiming to address a common problem, disease outbreaks. For donors who commit colossal sums of money to outbreak response, the current model is neither efficient nor transparent. Innovative approaches to coordinate financing have recently been tested as part of a broader development agenda for humanitarian response. Adopting a system that enables donors to invest in disease outbreaks rather than actors represents an opportunity to deliver a more cost-effective, transparent, and unified global response to infectious disease outbreaks. Achieving this will be challenging, but the World Health Organization (WHO) must play a vital role. New thinking is
required to improve emergency response in an increasingly crowded and financially convoluted global health arena.”

Inaugural Nipah conference (Singapore)

Health experts warn of emerging threat of Nipah virus

 Reuters:

“A deadly virus called Nipah carried by bats has already caused human outbreaks across South and South East Asia and has “serious epidemic potential”, global health and infectious disease specialists said on Monday. The virus, identified in 1999 in Malaysia and Singapore, has sparked outbreaks with mortality rates of between 40% and 90% and spread thousands of kilometers to Bangladesh and India - yet there are no drugs or vaccines against it, they said. “Twenty years have passed since its discovery, but the world is still not adequately equipped to tackle the global health threat posed by Nipah virus,” said Richard Hatchett, chief executive of the CEPI Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, which is co-leading a Nipah conference this week in Singapore.”

...Among [CEPI’s] first disease targets is Nipah, a virus carried primarily by certain types of fruit bats and pigs, which can also be transmitted directly from person to person as well as through contaminated food. ... The two-day Nipah conference, the first to focus on this deadly virus, is being co-hosted by CEPI and the Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore.”

Ebola DRC – Again double digits...

Cidrap News - DRC records 10 new Ebola cases as WHO fights resurgence


“The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) recorded 10 new Ebola cases today, as reflected on the World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) Ebola dashboard. The double-digit jump is a disheartening return to numbers last seen in mid-September. The 10 new cases raise the outbreak total to 3,340, including 2,207 deaths. A total of 441 suspected cases are still under investigation. In its latest situation report on the outbreak, the WHO said the Ebola response has been severely disrupted by violence in the eastern regions of the DRC....”

Guardian - Ebola responders face deadly attacks. We must step up security in DRC


“... We need to do more to keep them [health workers] safe, because if they cannot access the hotbeds of the outbreak, more people will become infected and die. We cannot allow that to happen.
To do this requires action on three fronts: stepped-up security, effective dialogue at community level, and a clear demonstration of political will to protect humanitarian operations...” Dr. Tedros explains what he means by this.

Quick links:

Reuters - Congo authorities say Ebola survivor falls ill a second time

Reliefweb - Ebola J&J Vaccination Campaign launched jointly by Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo

“Rwanda has launched its first large-scale vaccination campaign against the Ebola virus. At least 200,000 people will be vaccinated over the next year in areas bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda’s health minister Diane Gashumba said at the weekend. ... Priority will be given to health workers, immigration officials, police and those engaged in cross-border trade....”

Gender equality

Lancet - Offline: What is the point of gender equality anyway?

R Horton; https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33095-8/fulltext

“...In 2020, there will be a major review of progress towards these commitments—Beijing+25. Next year will be the most important opportunity for a generation to accelerate action to improve the health of women and girls. But that opportunity cannot be seized by taking a business-as-usual approach to gender inequality, an approach unfortunately endorsed and institutionalised by the Beijing Declaration's advocacy for economic development through market capitalism. As currently conceived, Beijing+25 will fail....”

The reason, Horton hints: it’s time to move beyond capitalism if we want to make real progress on gender equality. Read why.

SRHR

Newsweek – the Trump administration’s grades for SRHR are in


“... The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Index is a tool that critically assesses the U.S. government’s global health policies and funding that impact sexual and reproductive health and rights. For most U.S. government agencies, 2018 marked the second straight year of declining scores — and the U.S. Agency for International Development, which had high marks for meeting
global commitments in 2017, saw a dramatic drop in its score for 2018, declining from an A- (91.5) to a C (76) ...”

And a link: Guardian - Chilean anti-rape anthem becomes international feminist phenomenon

NTDs

First African Conference On Neglected Diseases Calls For Increased Efforts To Tackle The Challenges  (Nairobi)


“An International Conference on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) ended in Nairobi on Friday with calls for increased research, resources and strengthened cross border partnerships to accelerate the elimination of the diseases. The three day inaugural conference in Africa brought together some 230 participants including scientists, researchers, policy makers and pharmaceutical companies from 19 countries. ... WHO was one of the sponsors of the conference together with other organizations: The DRUID Project, The Foundation For Innovative New Diagnostics, WHO, The Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative, The End Fund, The Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, The Schistosomiasis Control Initiative and Evidence Action....”

Lancet (Editorial) – 2020: a crucial year for neglected tropical diseases

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33070-3/fulltext

“The inaugural World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day will be marked on Jan 30, 2020. “#BeatNTDs: For good. For all” is the slogan aiming to gather support and build momentum for a decisive year of action against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Jan 30 is the anniversary of the 2012 London Declaration on NTDs, which did much to bring together policy makers across countries and to encourage investment to commit to control and elimination of NTDs.”

“...To inform efforts to reduce the global impact of NTDs, a discussion paper by UNDP draws attention to the gender dimensions of NTDs. ... 2020 is particularly notable because WHO is expected to launch new goals during the year to guide progress against NTDs until 2030. Reducing the burden of disease and disability caused by NTDs is essential to improving the health of the world’s poorest people.”

HIV

WHO Afro - WHO unveils plan to tackle rising HIV drug resistance in Africa

Still some news from the ICASA Kigali conference. “...Growing resistance to HIV drugs in Africa is threatening the significant progress made in the global fight against the virus. In an effort to reinforce the gains and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners today are unveiling a five-year plan to monitor, prevent and respond to drug resistance. WHO developed the Regional Action Plan which is being presented at the 1–6 December International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) in Kigali, Rwanda....”

Birth registration

Failure to register newborns leaves millions ‘invisible’ warns UN Children’s Fund


“While the number of registered births has significantly increased over the past decade, one quarter of children globally remain unaccounted for, leaving them vulnerable and “invisible”, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said on Wednesday.”

UNICEF reports that the births of one in four children under-five, or some 166 million children globally, have never been officially recorded. ... The findings come in the new report, Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track? It was released on Wednesday, UNICEF’s 73rd birthday.”

Lancet Comment – Universal birth registration by 2030: progress and challenges

M Hereward et al: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33101-0/fulltext

“The right of every individual to be recognised before the law and to be registered at birth is cited in nearly every major human rights instrument since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the past decade, important global and regional initiatives have promoted the advancement of birth registration, including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework. This major milestone put birth registration firmly on the international development agenda. A dedicated target (16.9) under SDG 16 aims to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. A complementary target 17.9 calls for support to countries in building the capacity needed to establish robust national civil registration systems. When such systems operate effectively, they produce vital statistics, including those on birth registration, that create the foundation for sustained human and economic development....”

“On Dec 11, 2019, on the occasion of its 73rd birthday, UNICEF published Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track? The report provides global and regional estimates of the number of infants younger than 1 year and children younger than 5 years who are unregistered. The report also analyses trends over time and highlights the effort needed to achieve universal birth registration by the end of the SDG era....”
Vaccines

Global Health Now - The Myth about Herd Immunity
L Vasudevan & G Yamey; GHN;

“...While vaccinations are often framed as an individual decision, these impacts on public health should not be undersold. Doctors and public health officials need to be more proactive in explaining these benefits. A good place to start is by dispelling the myths about herd immunity—explaining to parents how herd immunity works, and when it doesn’t, and ensuring they understand the consequences to the larger community of the supposedly “individual” choice to forgo or delay immunizations....”

Lancet Global Health (January issue)

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/issue/current

Most papers were already published online before. Start with the Editorial - 2020–30: the decade of anti-corruption?

Other (new) reads you might want to delve into: Analysing the affordability of the EAT–Lancet diet

Comment: (M Kruk & M Pate): The Lancet Global Health Commission on High Quality Health Systems 1 year on: progress on a global imperative

“... where is the world a year later? We reflected on our experience as Commission co-chairs and conducted an informal poll of Commissioners and our Secretariat. Here are a few takeaways from an eventful year. Perhaps most significantly, the Commission’s report prompted high-level discussions in a number of countries. ... ... It has been encouraging to see serious discussions of health system quality, including ambitious health system reforms, taking place among development partners, including bilateral organisations, foundations, the World Bank, WHO, and the Interamerican Development Bank. One Commissioner noted that the report “has influenced a mind-shift among governments and partners, including WHO, towards prioritising quality of care as a major health system function that requires development and investment”.

Some papers of the week

HP&P – Understanding fragility: implications for global health research and practice
“Advances in population health outcomes risk being slowed—and potentially reversed—by a range of threats increasingly presented as ‘fragility’. Widely used and critiqued within the development arena, the concept is increasingly used in the field of global health, where its relationship to population health, health service delivery, access and utilization is poorly specified. We present the first scoping review seeking to clarify the meaning, definitions and applications of the term in the global health literature. ... There has been an exponential increase in applications of the concept in published literature over the last 10 years. Formal definitions of the term continue to be focused on the characteristics of ‘fragile and conflict-affected states’. However, synthesis indicates diverse use of the concept with respect to: level of application (e.g. from state to local community); emphasis on particular antecedent stressors (including factors beyond conflict and weak governance); and focus on health system or community resources (with an increasing tendency to focus on the interface between two). Amongst several themes identified, trust is noted as a key locus of fragility at this interface, with critical implications for health seeking, service utilization and health system and community resilience.”

HP&P supplement - Access to Medicines through Health Systems in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

https://academic.oup.com/heapol/issue/34/Supplement_3

Start with the Editorial - Access to medicines through health systems in low- and middle-income countries (by S Ozawa et al)

“Nearly 2 billion people globally have no access to essential medicines. This means essential medicines are unavailable, unaffordable, inaccessible, unacceptable or of low quality for more than a quarter of the population worldwide. This supplement demonstrates the implications of poor medicine access and highlights recent innovations to improve access to essential medicines by presenting new research findings from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). These studies answer key questions such as: Can performance-based financing improve availability of essential medicines? How affordable are cardiovascular treatments for children? Which countries’ legal frameworks promote universal access to medicines? How appropriately are people using medicines? Do poor-quality medicines impact equity? Answers to these questions are important as essential medicines are vital to the Sustainable Development Goals and are central to the goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage. Access to affordable, quality-assured essential medicines is crucial to reducing the financial burden of care, preventing greater pain and suffering, shortening the duration of illness, and averting needless disabilities and deaths worldwide. This supplement was organized by the Medicines in Health Systems Thematic Working Group of Health Systems Global, a membership organization dedicated to promoting health systems research and knowledge translation. The five studies in the supplement further our understanding by showcasing recent successes and challenges of improving access to quality-assured medicines through health systems in LMICs.”

African Journal of AIDS research - The state of costing research for HIV interventions in sub-Saharan Africa

The past decade has seen a growing emphasis on the production of high-quality costing data to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of global health interventions. The need for such data is especially important for decision making and priority setting across HIV services from prevention and testing to treatment and care. To help address this critical need, the Global Health Cost Consortium was created in 2016, in part to conduct a systematic search and screening of the costing literature for HIV and TB interventions in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). The purpose of this portion of the remit was to compile, standardise, and make publicly available published cost data (peer-reviewed and gray) for public use. We limit our analysis to a review of the quantity and characteristics of published cost data from HIV interventions in sub-Saharan Africa. ... ... We find a dearth of cost estimates from HIV interventions in west Africa, as well as inconsistent reporting of key dimensions of cost including platform type, ownership and urbanicity. Further, we find clear evidence of a need for renewed focus on the consistent reporting of scale by authors of costing and cost-effectiveness analyses.

IJHPM - Understanding Structure and Agency as Commercial Determinants of Health; Comment on “How Neoliberalism Is Shaping the Supply of Unhealthy Commodities and What This Means for NCD Prevention”
http://www.ijhpm.com/article_3713.html

By Kelley Lee et al. Need i say more?

“The limited success to date, by the public health community, to address the dramatic rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has prompted growing attention to the commercial determinants of health. This has led to a much needed shift in attention, from metabolic and behavioural risk factors, to the production and consumption of health-harming products by the commercial sector. Building on Lencucha and Thow’s analysis of neoliberalism, in shaping the underlying policy environment favouring commercial interests, we argue for fuller engagement with structure and agency interaction when conceptualising, assessing, and identifying public health measures to address the commercial determinants of health.”

Ecological Economics - Ecological economics and degrowth: Proposing a future research agenda from the margins

K Hanacek et al;

“Research by ecological economists on degrowth is a flourishing field. Existing research has focused on limits to (green) growth and on economic alternatives for prospering without growth. Future research, we argue here, should pay more attention to, and be written, from the “margins” – that is from the point of view of those marginalized in the growth economy. We conduct a comprehensive systematic review of the prevalent themes in the existing literature on the ecological economics of degrowth, and its engagements with North-South relations and gender issues. The analysis identifies seven research areas where ecological economics can better integrate these matters, namely: the study of post-growth policies for the Global South; the unequal exchanges that sustain an imperial mode of living; the deconstruction of ecological economic concepts that reproduce problematic Western or gendered assumptions; the study of the clash of metabolisms in peripheries of the Global South; the metabolism of care-work in growth economies; the leading role
of women in ecological distribution conflicts, and the reproduction of gender inequalities in alternative post-growth spaces. We propose that ecological economics should welcome more contributions from critical feminist scholarship and scholars from the Global South.”


Via a tweet from Bill Easterly – “New study finds that Jeff Sachs' Millennium Village in northern Ghana had small or null effects; the Big Push did not appear to break the Poverty Trap HT @m_clem.”

Some blogs & mainstream articles of the week

The Conversation - The dark side of plant-based food – it's more about money than you may think
M Cohen et al; The Conversation

Interesting stuff, though perhaps not entirely a new insight. Zooming in on the global debate, but also on India, ...

While we’re at it, speaking of the ‘dark side’, you might also want to read Jason Hickel’s The dark side of the Nordic model

Linked to his new sustainable development index (ranking). “Scandinavian countries may top every ranking on human development, but they are a disaster for the environment.” Retweeted by Greta herself 😊.

Global Policy Watch - Snakes and ladders in sustainable development indexing

One of the must-reads of this week. Roberto Bissio reviews Hickel’s Sustainable Development Index. The index was published by him in the January 2020 edition of the Ecological Economics Journal

Bissio’s (largely positive) conclusion:

“...While this is not a minor achievement, this new JH-SDI cannot yet claim to be a proxy for the Sustainable Development Goals, as it does not account in any way for inequalities (including gender inequalities) or governance issues (including human rights and access to justice). There is
room for improvement, certainly, but this does not in any way diminish the intellectual accomplishment of Jason Hickel. Using only five indicators (life expectancy, education, per capita income, material footprint and CO2 emissions) his Sustainable Development Index pushes the debate forward and improves our understanding of where we are on the 2030 Agenda in a way that the SDG Indicators Framework with its 300 indicators (most lacking sufficient data) has not yet been able to do.” Ouch.

LSE (blog) – Reconciling de-growth and development economics

T Wuttke;  https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/2019/12/10/reconciling-de-growth-development-economics/

“MSc Development Studies alum and PhD Candidate at the Centre of African Economies at Roskilde University, Tobias Wuttke, questions how viable de-growth is a concept in light of the climate crisis when we are also trying to combat income poverty globally.” He finds a good balance, in my opinion.

IHP – Health financing and Public Finance Management: did we get closer to bridging the divide?


Brendan Kwesiga & Kenneth Munge reflect on a recent meeting in Montreux, Switzerland.

Guardian - Americans take fish antibiotics because it's cheaper than a visit to the doctor


Shocking on many, many levels (as somebody noted on Twitter).

Some tweets of the week

- Richard Horton (in a cranky mood, last week on Friday, when checking his early morning twitter feed)

“Forgive the morning crankiness, but the more I see global health leaders congratulate/applaud one another, the more I see them air-kiss, smile, retweet and like, the more I think global health is a vast international conspiracy to maintain the political and economic status quo.”

“Global health isn’t some warm-hearted friendship circle where we all gather to toast how saintly we are. Global health is a brutal/angry political struggle to challenge/defeat the forces—political, economic, commercial—that kill/maim/oppress the excluded, silenced, and invisible.”
The tweets went viral.

- **Godelieve van Heteren** (HS Governance Collaborative)

  “Absolutely thrilled at the launch of the WHO /HSGC /@AllianceHSPR / UHCPartnership framework for Governance capacities MoH. Launchwebinar ongoing re practical applications framework as tool of analysis in countries @governance_hs. “

* Katri Bertram (GFF)

  “Important updates from @bmg_bund on #G7 #globalhealth: next year health will not be on agenda, but #PHC initiative launched this year will be relaunched on #UHCDay (12.12) in France.”

John Kirton replied:

“In 2020 it is on the @g20 Riyadh summit agenda. Perhaps the St Petersburg BRICS too. And G7 Camp David could surprise, given the US opioid crisis & Trump-Xi at G20 2018.”

- **Richard Horton**, yesterday, on UHC Day:

  “The message today—December 12, Universal Health Coverage Day—is Keep The Promise. But how do we keep the promise when there is zero independent accountability to hold governments accountable for their commitments? Advocacy without accountability is shameless narcissism.”

- **UHC Partnership**:


**Global health events**

**Coming up next week- new Lancet Series on the Double Burden of Malnutrition**

Global governance of health

Stat - With new trade deal, Trump deals a blow to drug makers


(gated) “The Trump administration’s Tuesday agreement on a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico is very bad news for the drug industry. The newly unveiled deal, commonly known as USMCA, will not have any protection for high-tech biologic drugs, which are made from living cells. That’s a huge break from the first version of the deal, which was unveiled in late September 2018 and included 10 years of exclusivity protection for these drugs. That provision was removed as part of an effort to appease House Democrats, who must approve the trade deal before it can be ratified....”

For more overall analysis on the trade deal, see (CBC) NAFTA 2.1: The changes Democrats (and Canada) settled on

And meanwhile, we bet you’ve heard WTO is in a near existential crisis.

WB (Data) blog - Disability data is integral to achieving the SDGs


Insightful blog on what the WB does in terms of disability data.

FT - White House objects to $1bn World Bank loan programme for China

https://www.ft.com/content/e1da66f0-17a2-11ea-9ee4-11f260415385

See also The Guardian - Donald Trump calls for World Bank to halt all China lending

“Donald Trump has called for the World Bank to stop lending money to China, a day after the institution adopted a lending plan to Beijing despite Washington’s objections. The World Bank on Thursday adopted a plan to aid China with $1bn to $1.5bn in low-interest loans annually until 2025. The plan called for lending to “gradually decline” from the previous five-year average of $1.8bn. Trump tweeted on Friday night: “Why is the World Bank loaning money to China? Can this be
possible? China has plenty of money, and if they don’t, they create it. STOP!” The president was reiterating a position long held by his administration, including David Malpass when he was a treasury department official before his election as the current head of the World Bank. Trump’s message on the World Bank echoed his treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, who told a House of Representatives committee on Thursday that the US “has objected” to the institution’s multi-year program of loans and projects in China....”

Check out also this: Axios - Read the documents: China tried to get World Bank funds to spy on Uighurs

COPASAH Charter and Call to Action for Social Accountability for Health With Slogan: “Health for All, Grounded in People”


Adopted on October 18, 2019 at New Delhi, India.

• Quick link:

Guardian - China steps in as Zambia runs out of loan options

“Southern Africa’s third largest economy is a textbook example of the increasing debt facing a fast-growing continent.”

• Tweet:

“Congratulations to Dr. Matthew Kavanagh @MMKavanagh, assistant professor of international health @GtownNHS, on being appointed by @UNAIDS Executive Director @Winnie_Byanyima to serve as co-chair of a new Strategic Advisory Group. “

UHC

Devex - Opinion: Keeping the promise — time to move from declarations to deeds on UHC

Pretty neat **helicopter view analysis** of where we stand, in terms of UHC, after this year. By **Caroline Reynolds** (Distinguished Fellow with The George Institute for Global Health and a Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies).

**Chatham House (Expert Comment) – South Africa Can Easily Afford National Health Insurance**


Recommended. “Countries with much lower per capita GDP have successfully implemented universal healthcare.”

**IJHPM - Implementation Research: An Efficient and Effective Tool to Accelerate Universal Health Coverage**

Agnes Binagwaho et al; [http://www.ijhp.com/article_3718.html](http://www.ijhp.com/article_3718.html)

“Success in the implementation of evidence-based interventions (EBIs) in different settings has had variable success. **Implementation research offers the approach needed to understand the variability of health outcomes from implementation strategies in different settings and why interventions were successful in some countries and failed in others.** When mastered and embedded into a policy and implementation framework, the application of implementation research by countries can provide policy-makers and implementers with the knowledge necessary to work towards universal health coverage (UHC) with the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and fidelity needed to achieve sustainable positive health outcomes for all. To achieve this goal however, work is needed by the communities of research producers and consumers to create more clarity on implementation research methodologies and to build capacity to apply them as a critical tool for countries on their path to achieving UHC.”

**CGD - Nigeria’s Low Tax Collection and Poor Quality of Government Expenditure: Political and Administrative Impediments to Improvement**


“This study examines the political and administrative barriers to domestic resource mobilization in Nigeria, whose tax ratios are significantly lower than those of neighboring countries. In 2000–2002 and 2014–2017, respectively, the ratio of domestic tax to gross domestic product averaged 5.8 percent and 3.9 percent annually, and value-added tax ratios were 1.0 percent and 0.8 percent. Uncoordinated, sweeping tax exemptions, the multiplicity of taxes, inadequate infrastructure, and
political considerations are key factors contributing to low domestic tax collection. The quality of government spending also suffers immensely from persistent delays in budget approval, erratic releases and low utilization of funds, weak procurement practices, and the influence of electoral cycles. Development partners have supported capacity building through training programs aimed at increasing tax revenues and enhancing expenditure efficiency. More work needs to be done in areas such as continuous tax reforms, greater use of digital technology, human capital development, and effective delivery of services.”

Le Monde - « La médecine traditionnelle peut contribuer à une couverture santé universelle en Afrique »


In French, but an interesting read. Do use Google translate if needed 😊. “...un nombre croissant d’Etats africains prennent des mesures visant à intégrer la médecine traditionnelle dans leur système national de santé.... »

CGD – Harnessing the Power of Private Distribution Channels for UHC

P Yadav & A Glassman:  https://www.cgdev.org/publication/harnessing-power-private-distribution-channels-uhc#.XfJkwLebdT0.twitter

“New technology, better use of data, and entrepreneurial passion in improving distribution channels is reaching a critical mass with the potential to drive extraordinary improvements in availability, affordability, and quality of health products. Global health institutions can play a significant role in further boosting the overall innovation ecosystem for health products distribution. However, most distribution system innovators are missing from global discussions around UHC and access to medicines. This note provides background on why the mainstream global health architecture has struggled to find the right engagement model with the private distribution channel and presents ideas that could be included in the new “toolbox” for development assistance for health.”

* And a link (Brookings) - The 5 problems China must tackle now to achieve the 2030 health SDGs

Based on a recent Plos Med paper.
Planetary health

Devex - Civil society groups removed from COP25 for protesting 'sleepwalking' negotiations


“Protesters attempting to draw attention to the gap between the urgency of climate action and the pace of negotiations in Madrid were removed from the COP25 venue on Wednesday and given no information about whether they would be allowed back in.”

IISD - WHO Calls for Financing to Address Climate Risks to Health

IISD:

See last week’s IHP news. “The World Health Organization (WHO) has published a report highlighting that health systems will increasingly need to deal with climate-related health conditions, such as heat stress, impacts of extreme weather events, and a rise in vector-borne diseases such as cholera, dengue fever, and malaria. At the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid, Spain, WHO is calling on countries to mainstream health in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and national communications to the UNFCCC, and on donors to support countries in their efforts....”

Guardian - Greenland's ice sheet melting seven times faster than in 1990s

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/dec/10/greenland-ice-sheet-melting-seven-times-faster-than-in-1990s

“Greenland’s ice sheet is melting much faster than previously thought, threatening hundreds of millions of people with inundation and bringing some of the irreversible impacts of the climate emergency much closer. Ice is being lost from Greenland seven times faster than it was in the 1990s, and the scale and speed of ice loss is much higher than was predicted in the comprehensive studies of global climate science by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, according to data. That means sea level rises are likely to reach 67cm by 2100, about 7cm more than the IPCC’s main prediction. Such a rate of rise will put 400 million people at risk of flooding every year, instead of the 360 million predicted by the IPCC, by the end of the century....”
CFR project – The Human Microbiome and the Health of Individuals and Their Environments

Laurie Garrett; https://www.cfr.org/project/human-microbiome-and-health-individuals-and-their-environments

“...The last decade has witnessed a shift in scientific perspective, driven by biologists' newfound ability to rapidly sequence the genetic blueprints of ecologies ranging from the human gut to Arctic permafrost. A global scale change to microbiomes, which are the aggregate of microorganisms such as bacteria, that inhabit the human body and all other environments, is underway, with deleterious effects on the world in which we live. Although the urgency of this situation is gravely understood by microbiologists, it is little known or understood by the general public or political leaders. From a foreign policy point of view, my interest is in considering how changes to microbiomes may serve as "canaries in the coal mine" for climate change impact, and how essential planetary functions may be altered by substantial microbiome damage. Are such transnational impacts subject to treaties, regulation, or global action? Can recognition of microbial impact provide a new political dimension to the global climate debate, and urgency for action given recognition that there are links to human health? My work on these issues will result in a book. I also convene the Human Microbiome and the Health of Individuals and Their Environments Roundtable Series to discuss these questions.”

Guardian - 1.9 billion people at risk from water supply problems, study shows


“A quarter of the world’s population are at risk of water supply problems as mountain glaciers, snow-packs and alpine lakes are run down by global heating and rising demand, according to an international study. The first inventory of high-altitude sources finds the Indus is the most important and vulnerable “water tower” due to run-off from the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, Ladakh, and Himalayan mountain ranges, which flow downstream to a densely populated and intensively irrigated basin in Pakistan, India, China and Afghanistan.... The study by 32 scientists, which was published in the Nature journal on Monday, confirms Asian river basins face the greatest demands but shows pressures are also rising on other continents....”

Brookings - National climate strategies are forgetting about girls, children, and youth


“In Madrid this week, the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) meets to finalize key decisions of the Paris...
Agreement before implementation next year. With countries set to submit revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs—or, a country’s plan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement) in 2020, timing couldn’t be more opportune to bring to light a critical gap in climate strategies: NDCs are ignoring girls and overlooking the rights of children and youth, including their right to meaningfully participate in climate policymaking that affects them.

“...Our new report analyzed 160 NDCs and found that only three countries (Malawi, Venezuela, and Zambia) make explicit reference to girls, only one country (Zambia) mentions girls’ education, and no country formally recognizes the role that an investment in girls’ education could make in its climate strategy....”

Quick links:
Devex - IFRC makes climate action its top priority

“The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies... ... released a 2030 strategy last week that put the climate at the front and center of every program and appeal. Climate change tops a list of five global challenges that IFRC says must be addressed in the coming decade. The other challenges included are crises and disasters; health; migration and identity; and values, power, and inclusion....”

Infectious diseases & NTDs

Lancet World Report – Global surge in measles should be “a wake-up call”
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33066-1/fulltext

“Progress towards elimination of measles has reversed in recent years, and scientists call for a swift response. Ed Holt reports.”

Science Daily - What blocks bird flu in human cells?

Science Daily;

“Normally, bird flu viruses do not spread easily from person to person. But if this does happen, it could trigger a pandemic. Researchers have now explained what makes the leap from animals to humans less likely.”
Washington Post - Facebook ads push misinformation about HIV prevention drugs, LGBT activists say, ‘harming public health’

“Fifty-two top LGBT advocates say the company has ignored their calls to action, creating a major public-health concern that puts patients at risk.”

“Facebook users have been bombarded with misleading ads about medication meant to prevent the transmission of HIV, according to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender advocates, who say the tech giant’s refusal to remove the content has created a public-health crisis. The ads have been viewed millions of times in recent months, Facebook’s archive reveals, and LGBT organizations argue they’ve had a dire effect: They’ve scared patients, potentially those who may be most at risk of contracting HIV, out of taking preventative drugs, known as PrEP, even though health officials and federal regulators have said they are safe. Many of the ads appear to have been purchased by personal-injury lawyers and entities affiliated with them. They allege in lawsuits that HIV medications, such as Truvada, actually threaten patients with serious side effects. But groups led by GLAAD, which regularly advises Facebook on LGBT issues, say the ads are “false” and have urged Facebook for months to take them down — to no avail…”

Global Health: Science and Practice - Realizing the “40 by 2022” Commitment from the United Nations High-Level Meeting on the Fight to End Tuberculosis: What Will It Take to Meet Rapid Diagnostic Testing Needs?

Amy Piatek et al; http://www.ghspjournal.org/content/early/2019/12/05/GHSP-D-19-00244

“Existing rapid diagnostics offer faster and more sensitive diagnosis of tuberculosis (TB) and simultaneous detection of multidrug-resistant TB. A 5-fold increase in investment in these tools is needed to meet the needs of the TB community and the United Nations’ ambitious 40 million by 2022 diagnosis and treatment target.”

Journal of Clinical TB and other mycobacterial diseases - Quality of tuberculosis care by pharmacies in low- and middle-income countries: Gaps and opportunities


“This paper sets out to conceptualise the key issues surrounding quality of TB care in the low- and middle-income country pharmacy setting; examine the empirical evidence on quality of care; and review the interventions employed to improve this.
Nature - Building a better malaria vaccine

As the first vaccine against the malaria parasite begins to roll out, scientists are working on a wide variety of alternatives that they hope will provide more protection.

Plos Med - The projected impact of geographic targeting of oral cholera vaccination in sub-Saharan Africa: A modeling study

Our study suggests that geographic targeting substantially improves the cost-effectiveness and impact of oral cholera vaccination campaigns.

Bloomberg – Fears Polio Spreading in Southeast Asia as Malaysia Case Emerges

Malaysia has confirmed its first case of polio in almost three decades, sparking fears that the disease is spreading across the region after the Philippines declared an epidemic in September.

AMR

Quick links:

- Wired - Scientists Find a Weak Spot in Some Superbugs' Defenses

Treatment-resistant infections are increasingly common—and increasingly deadly. Now researchers have found a new way to attack some of those bacteria.

Based on a new study in PNAS - Antimicrobial sensing coupled with cell membrane remodeling mediates antibiotic resistance and virulence in Enterococcus faecalis.

- Business Standard - India has largest number of multidrug-resistant TB cases, says MoS Health.
Eurekalert - Regional trends in overdose deaths reveal multiple opioid epidemics, according to new study

Eurekalert:

“The United States is suffering from several different simultaneous opioid epidemics, rather than just a single crisis, according to an academic study of deaths caused by drug overdoses. David Peters, an associate professor of sociology at Iowa State University, co-authored the study, which appeared in the academic journal Rural Sociology...”

The study describes three different opioid epidemics in the United States, as well as a syndemic, or a single population experiencing more than one epidemic...

Forthcoming book – HITAP: NCD Prevention – Best buys, wasted buys and contestable buys

https://www.buyitbestncd.health/

HITAP stands for Thailand’s Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program: “Created by an international consortium of experts, this informative and accessible book provides practical guidelines, key learning points, and dynamic, real-world case studies to aid NCD program managers, policy officers and decision-makers in low- and middle-income countries, so that they can assess interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs. The book was commissioned by the Prince Mahidol Award Conference (PMAC)...” So on evidence-based NCD prevention interventions within the framework of UHC implementation.

To be launched at PMAC 2020.

Quick link:

BMJ blog - Including the private sector in partnerships to tackle non-communicable diseases

“Dennis Odai Laryea and Thomas B Cueni argue that, with proper safeguards, pharmaceutical companies can make an important contribution. This article is part of the Solutions for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases collection by the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs and The BMJ.”
Sexual & Reproductive / maternal, neonatal & child health

Guardian - Major global hotel brands accused of profiting from sex trafficking


“Hotel brands owned by Hilton, Intercontinental and Best Western are among a number of leading global chains accused of profiting from sex trafficking. In a landmark case that lawyers claim demonstrates “industry-wide failures” to prevent sex trafficking, it has been alleged that women and children were held captive, abused and sold for sex in their guest rooms across the US....”

FT - North Korean defectors reveal wretched state of female health

https://www.ft.com/content/d033c254-1ba6-11ea-7348c2f183af

(Gated). “Interviews expose a maternal mortality rate 15-times higher than UN data.”

“Healthcare for women and babies in North Korea is far worse than international research has previously shown, according to new evidence from hundreds of defectors. North Korea’s maternal mortality rate is 1,200 deaths per 100,000 births, 15 times higher than what had been reported in UN data and nearly five times above the global average, according to the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, a Seoul-based non-governmental organisation....”

Devex - Time to put abortion top of the SRHR agenda


Fierce call to action by Anu Kunar (CEO Ipas).

“Ipas — in partnership with the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women, Center for Reproductive Rights, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Marie Stopes International, Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice, SPECTRA, and Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva de America Latina y el Caribe, a network of feminists working for sexual and reproductive justice in Latin America and the Caribbean — co-drafted the Global Declaration on Abortion. The declaration, signed by more than 350 organizations, calls for governments, United Nations agencies, civil society
organizations, health providers, the private sector, and the donor community to follow these five recommendations:

TMIH - Monitoring maternal and newborn health outcomes globally: a brief history of key events and initiatives


“Over time, we have seen a major evolution of measurement initiatives, indicators and methods, such that today a wide range of maternal and perinatal indicators are monitored and new indicators are under development. Monitoring global progress in maternal and newborn health outcomes and development has been dominated in recent decades by efforts to set, measure and achieve global goals and targets: the Millennium Development Goals followed by the Sustainable Development Goals. This paper aims to review, reflect and learn on accelerated progress towards global goals and events, including universal health coverage, and better tracking of maternal and newborn health outcomes....”

SRHM - Ending the abuse: the human rights implications of obstetric violence and the promise of rights-based policy to realise respectful maternity care


“In September 2019, Dubravka Šimonovic, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on violence against women (VAW), submitted her report to the UN General Assembly on “mistreatment and VAW during reproductive health services with a focus on childbirth and obstetric violence”. This report solidified obstetric violence as a form of VAW – a human rights violation to be addressed by the UN, rather than solely a matter of quality of care for maternal health professionals. The positioning opens new channels for interdisciplinary advocacy to be translated into multisectoral policy. However, the risk is that rights-based approaches remain siloed within the human rights community, rather than serving as a foundation for broad-based policy reforms. ... ... Building from the report of the Special Rapporteur, this commentary outlines the interdisciplinary scholarship and advocacy around obstetric violence, examines mistreatment in SRH services as an intersectional human rights violation, and provides policy recommendations for strengthening multisectoral efforts to ensure respectful maternity care for all....”

BMJ Global Health - Promoting women’s and children’s health through community groups in low-income and middle-income countries: a mixed-methods systematic review of mechanisms, enablers and barriers

M Gram et al; https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/6/e001972
“Community mobilisation through group activities has been used to improve women’s and children’s health in a range of low-income and middle-income contexts, but the mechanisms through which it works deserve greater consideration. We did a mixed-methods systematic review of mechanisms, enablers and barriers to the promotion of women’s and children’s health in community mobilisation interventions.”

IDS launches new programme to counter backlash against gender equality


“Global progress on gender equality is under threat. We are living in an age where major political and social shifts are resulting in new forces that are visibly pushing back to reverse the many gains made for women’s rights and to shrink civic space. ... Building on IDS’ 40 year history on the frontline of progress in ‘gender and development’ we are delighted to launch a timely five-year programme of work that will create much needed new knowledge of these complex phenomena, and identify opportunities for women’s rights organisations and other gender justice defenders to counter the backlash and address the erosion of gender objectives within development. The programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)....”

Access to medicines

Guardian – Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez say company seeking HIV patent extension 'deceitful and immoral'

Guardian:

“Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are calling on the Trump administration to block a drug company in its efforts to extend its patent on a crucial anti-HIV drug. In a letter to the US Patent and Trademark Office shared exclusively with the Guardian, the Vermont senator and the New York representative accuse the pharmaceutical company, Gilead, of “deceitful and immoral” behavior in holding back the drug, Descovy, from the market until its patent term for an earlier, allegedly less safe anti-HIV drug had been exhausted. “It is an absolute disgrace that in America, a greedy drug company like Gilead can deprive hundreds of thousands of Americans of lifesaving HIV medicine to extract more profit, lie about it, and then have the audacity to ask the US government to award it with a longer monopoly to reap tens of billions more in profits,” Sanders said....”

See also the Washington Post - Gilead delayed safer HIV drug to extend monopoly profits, advocates allege

“...An HIV-prevention group called PrEP4All Collaboration filed a petition Wednesday with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office contending Gilead knew its new, improved drug — approved in 2015 and now part of Gilead’s combination therapies Genvoya and Descovy — was safer. But it alleged
Gilead postponed development so it could continue to gain monopoly profits from its older combination HIV drugs, including Viread and Truvada, for a longer period, before those drugs went off patent and faced generic competition.

Health Research Policy & Systems - Analysis of the Health Product Profile Directory — a new tool to inform priority-setting in global public health


“The Health Product Profile Directory (HPPD) is an online database describing 8–10 key characteristics (such as target population, measures of efficacy and dosage) of product profiles for medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and other products that are intended to be accessed by populations in low- and middle-income countries. The HPPD was developed by TDR on behalf of WHO and launched on 15 May 2019....”

Quick links:

- Medicines, Law & Policy (by Ellen ‘t Hoen) - [Socially Responsible Licensing of Medical Technologies](https://health-policy-systems.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12961-019-0507-1)

“On 31 October, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) held their annual Trilateral Conference, entitled: “Cutting-Edge Health Technologies: Opportunities and Challenges.” At Trilateral Conferences, participants discuss issues related to intellectual property and health care....”


“Criminal activity surrounding the manufacture, distribution and sale of falsified medicines is “on the rise” as a global health problem in many developing countries and in rich nations – especially online – but efforts to stem the growing health threat will require robust collective action by all stakeholders, a top Novartis official warned Friday in Geneva. “Stakeholder engagement is critical,” Stanislas Barro, global head of Anti-Counterfeiting Global Security, at Novartis Pharma AG, told a panel against falsified medicines. The event, co-hosted by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) an industry umbrella group, and the Graduate Institute in Geneva, wrapped up a week of advocacy that raised awareness of counterfeit and substandard medicines under the theme “Fight the Fakes.”
Devex - People in conflict states bear highest cost of terrorism, report says


“Conflict is the primary driver of terrorist activity, which cost the global economy $33 billion in 2018, according to the “Global Terrorism Index 2019” report. Last year, 95% of deaths caused by terrorism happened in countries experiencing violent conflict. When countries with high levels of state-sponsored terrorism are included, this figure increases to 99%. The top 10 countries impacted by terrorism in 2018 were Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, India, Yemen, the Philippines, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — all of which were involved in armed conflict in 2018....”

Devex – UN chief presses member states to support CERF's flexible humanitarian funding


“U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock this week called on member states to match rising humanitarian needs with a boost in preventive and emergency response funding for 2020. “Next year, the United Nations and partner organizations aim to assist nearly 109 million people — the most vulnerable people on the planet. One in 45 people around the world are expected to need our help, the highest number ever. That will require funding of nearly $29 billion dollars,” Lowcock told member states during the annual pledging conference for the Central Emergency Response Fund on Monday....”

Nature Medicine- Looking forward 25 years: the future of medicine

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-019-0693-y

“To celebrate the end of our 25th anniversary year, we asked thought leaders and experts in the field to answer one question: What will shape the next 25 years of medical research?”

Featuring the views of, among others, John Nkengasong, Jeremy Farrar, Trevor Mundel, Els Torreele...
Review Commons launched – platform for high-quality journal-independent peer-review in the life sciences.

https://www.reviewcommons.org/?utm_source=STAT%20Newsletters&utm_campaign=fd5b2a1cda-MR_COPY_12&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-fd5b2a1cda-149563537

Preprint platform where researchers can submit their unpublished manuscripts for peer review.

“Review Commons transfers Referred Preprints on behalf of the authors to bioRxiv and 17 affiliate journals from EMBO Press, eLife, ASCB, The Company of Biologists, Rockefeller University Press and PLOS....”

Nature - Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03759-y

“Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.”

Nature – China splashes millions on hundreds of home-grown journals

Nature:

“China is taking dramatic steps to improve the quality and international reputation of its science journals. Publishers of hundreds of titles will receive generous government funding as part of a five-year plan to elevate the country’s publications to among the world’s best. The initiative marks a shift from a focus on getting Chinese science into prominent foreign-owned journals to an emphasis on improving Chinese-owned publications.”

Guardian - NHS gives Amazon free use of health data under Alexa advice deal


“Amazon has been given free access to healthcare information collected by the NHS as part of a contract with the government. The material, which excludes patient data, could allow the multinational technology company to make, advertise and sell its own products....”
Foreign Affairs – The Clash of Capitalisms

B Milanovic; https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-12-10/clash-capitalisms?sp_mid=62163876&sp_rid=bWdpbGxpbgFUZEBjZnlub3JnS0&spMailingID=62163876&spUserID=NDQ3OTE1NDc1MzYxS0&spJobID=1781897707&spReportId=MTc4MTg5NzcwNwS2

Unlike capitalism itself, not paywalled 😊.

Emerging Voices

HP&P - How does performance-based financing affect the availability of essential medicines in Cameroon? A qualitative study


Part of the new supplement in HP&P (see ‘papers of the week’ section). “...Our research aimed to explore how PBF in Cameroon influenced the availability of Essential Medicines, and to understand the pathways leading to the experiential dimension related with the observed changes....”

Research

Implementation science (Commentary) - Harnessing the power of theorising in implementation science


Editorial calling for theoretically informative implementation research.