

IHP newsletter 838 – Balancing Act (AI summary)

Introduction The weekly International Health Policies (IHP) newsletter, an initiative of the Health Policy unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, provides key updates on global health.

This issue begins with reflections on the **BRICS+ summit in Brazil**, from both a global health and a broader geopolitical perspective. Oliver Stuenkel noted that Donald Trump's "anti-American" labelling of BRICS ignores the deep U.S. ties of most members (except Russia and Iran), suggesting Trump's aim is to **"raise the cost of multialignment"** for countries seeking good relations with both Washington and Beijing. This creates a "balancing act" for nations like India and Saudi Arabia, with 'hedged globalization' emerging as a strategy where countries cultivate diverse partnerships to limit exposure to any single superpower. The newsletter also highlights Lula's framing of the IMF and World Bank as "a reversed Marshall Plan".

In global health discussions, the **next phase of pandemic talks resumed in Geneva** on 9 July, with the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) aiming to negotiate an annex to the pandemic agreement on a pathogen access and benefit sharing (PABS) system. Concurrently, a G20 Health working group meeting took place in South Africa (8-9 July). Looking ahead, the 13th IAS Conference on HIV Science is scheduled in Kigali, Rwanda (13-17 July), against the backdrop of UNAIDS' "mostly dire reading" 2025 Global AIDS update. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development is also set to begin in New York (14-23 July), with **SDG 3 (good health and well-being) on its agenda**. On climate change, the recent Global Tipping Points conference in the UK saw scientists warn that the **window to avoid irreversible climate impacts is "rapidly closing"**. There's a call for "Tipping Points" to be on the agenda for **COP30 in Brazil** (November), integrated into the "Economics of Health for All".

Featured Article: Beneath the Lullaby: A Mother's Pain Unheard, Unseen, Unanswered

Authored by Aishwarya Jha, this article sheds light on the often-invisible struggles of mothers in India. Despite cultural celebrations of motherhood, many women face a "silent epidemic" of **perinatal anxiety and depression**, a condition affecting an estimated 1 in 10 women in high-income countries and **1 in 5 in low- and middle-income countries**. In India specifically, around **22% of mothers suffer from postpartum depression**, yet their mental pain is frequently dismissed as temporary 'baby blues'.

The article illustrates this with a UNFPA India case of a 33-year-old Delhi homemaker whose severe perinatal depression was only recognised after a suicide attempt, highlighting a lack of awareness and support. It distinguishes this from **postpartum psychosis**, a rarer but severe mental health condition affecting about 0.1% of new mothers, characterised by hallucinations, delusions, and potentially harmful thoughts towards the child. However, **perinatal depression is far from rare** and constitutes a national crisis in India.

A significant barrier is **cultural stigma**, where a mother's struggle with mental health is perceived as a failure, leading women to suffer in silence due to fear of judgment. Critically, while India's National Health Policy, 2017, and Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, acknowledge mental health as a fundamental right, they **fail to specifically address perinatal mental health**, prioritising children and the elderly instead. This historical neglect, stemming from a focus on reducing physical maternal and infant mortality, has overshadowed mental well-being. The tragic case of Usha Mandal, a 28-year-old from West Bengal, illustrates how the denial of therapy due to caste, financial dependence, and severe depression led to a stillbirth. The article stresses that **perinatal depression has intergenerational impacts**, affecting children's development and newborns' physical health. It urges a shift from dismissing these issues as 'baby blues' to recognising the dire consequences of untreated clinical depression, advocating for mothers' silent cries to be heard and supported.

Highlights of the week

The read of the week

- **"Understanding the political economy of reforming global health initiatives – insights from global and country levels"** by S Witter et al.. This article in *Globalization & Health* explores the challenges in reforming Global Health Initiatives (GHIs) to address broader threats like NCDs, humanitarian crises, and climate change, highlighting how reform attempts are hindered by the political economy of existing structures. The findings suggest that while GHIs have been crucial, their accountability has largely been "upwards to funders," rather than focused on improving national health system performance.

BRICS+ summit Rio de Janeiro (6-7 July)

- **"Joint Leaders Declaration – BRICS Summit signs historic commitment in Rio for more inclusive and sustainable governance"**. Hosted by Brazil, the summit focused on "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance". The leaders adopted 126 commitments across global governance, finance, health, AI, and climate change.
- **"BRICS ministers endorse joint declarations containing commitments to strengthen economic cooperation"**. Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors endorsed declarations to strengthen multilateralism and economic development, including a unified proposal for IMF reforms, calling for a new distribution of voting rights and an end to the tradition of European management.
- **"BRICS to launch guarantee fund to boost investment in member nations, sources say"**. BRICS plans to establish a New Development Bank-backed guarantee fund by the end of 2025 to attract private investment for sustainable development projects, modelled on the World Bank's MIGA.
- **"Cooperation is humanity's greatest innovation,' UN chief declares at BRICS summit"**. UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised the human impact of environmental devastation and climate change, noting that sustainable development goals are being left behind as environmental disasters increase.
- **"In Rio, BRICS Tries to Play it Safe"** by Oliver Stuenkel. Stuenkel argues that Trump's goal is to raise the cost of multialignment for countries, and Brazil, ahead of COP30, aims to keep the BRICS summit low-key to avoid antagonising countries.
- **"BRICS agree to joint statement ahead of Rio leaders summit"**. The growing BRICS group, now including Iran and Saudi Arabia, calls for reform of traditional Western institutions while positioning itself as a defender of multilateralism.
- **"Brazil's BRICS agenda may be hard to accomplish after the Iran–Israel war"** by C Sabatini. The expanded and more heterogeneous BRICS+ grouping faces a test in collectively promoting Brazil's agenda of democratic multilateralism and international law, with the Iran-Israel war potentially tilting the group away from Rio's long-standing goals.
- **"The Rio summit showed that BRICS is less anti-Western than Russia would like it to be"** by N Sabanadze. The summit revealed strategic divergences among BRICS members, with not all interested in reshaping the global order or taking sides in power confrontations.

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- **"Joint Leaders Declaration – BRICS Summit signs historic commitment in Rio for more inclusive and sustainable governance"**. The 17th high-level leaders' meeting adopted **126 commitments** across global governance, finance, health, artificial intelligence, and climate change. On health, BRICS countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening global health governance through international cooperation and solidarity, aiming for equality, inclusion, transparency, and responsiveness to ensure no country is left behind in achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals. They also launched the Partnership for the Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases to promote health equity.
 - **Tweets by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General**. Dr. Tedros highlighted challenges and the importance of multilateralism, noting the **Pandemic Agreement** as an indication

that multilateralism is "alive and well". He urged countries to mobilize domestic resources for **Health for All** and stressed the vital role of AI and digital tools, ensuring their safe, ethical, and equitable use. He further thanked leaders for reaffirming support for WHO, the Pandemic Accord (including negotiations for the Annex on Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing), digital health, AI, healthy environments, ending TB, tackling antimicrobial resistance, universal health coverage, and primary health care. Dr. Tedros also emphasised that **health is the strongest argument for climate action**, advocating for new funding sources to implement solutions.

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- **"BRICS to launch guarantee fund to boost investment in member nations, sources say"**. BRICS plans to establish a New Development Bank-backed guarantee fund by the end of 2025, modelled on the World Bank's MIGA, to attract private investment for sustainable development projects in member countries.
- **"'Cooperation is humanity's greatest innovation,' UN chief declares at BRICS summit"** by António Guterres. UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that the environment is "being attacked on all fronts," stressing the human impact of environmental devastation and climate change, and noting that sustainable development goals are being left behind as environmental disasters increase.
- **"In Rio, BRICS Tries to Play it Safe"** by Oliver Stuenkel. Stuenkel suggests that Donald Trump's "anti-American" labelling of BRICS aims to "raise the cost of multialignment" for countries like India and Saudi Arabia, with Brazil keeping the summit low-key ahead of COP30 to avoid antagonism.
- **"BRICS agree to joint statement ahead of Rio leaders summit"**. The expanding BRICS group, now including Iran and Saudi Arabia, calls for reform of traditional Western institutions while positioning itself as a defender of multilateralism.
- **"Brazil's BRICS agenda may be hard to accomplish after the Iran-Israel war"** by C Sabatini. Sabatini questions whether the expanded and more heterogeneous BRICS+ grouping can collectively promote Brazil's agenda of democratic multilateralism and international law, as the Iran-Israel war may shift the group away from Rio's long-standing goals.
- **"The Rio summit showed that BRICS is less anti-Western than Russia would like it to be"** by N Sabanadze. Sabanadze argues that not all BRICS members are interested in reshaping the global order or taking sides in power confrontations, revealing strategic divergences within the group.

Run-up to the HLPF in New York (14-23 July)

- **"HLPF 2025 Prepares to Advance Inclusive, Evidence-based Solutions for SDGs"**. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, held under the auspices of ECOSOC, is the first HLPF after the 2024 Summit of the Future and will include **in-depth reviews of five Goals: SDG 3 (good health and well-being)**, SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals).
- **"SDG 3: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages"**. This brief reviews the status of SDG 3, emphasising that health is shaped by social, economic, and environmental factors, thus requiring integrated, **whole-of-society approaches** to create sustainable policies. Challenges include the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss, and demographic shifts.
- **"Webinar Previews HLPF 2025, Highlights Linkages with FfD4"**. Panelists at a preview webinar for HLPF 2025 focused on restoring trust in multilateralism, reviving the narrative on the SDGs, and the linkages with the outcomes of the Financing for Development conference (FfD4).

More on Global Health Governance & Financing

- **"New Multilateralism for Promoting Equity and Global South Agency: Principles, politics and strategies for remaking the global health architecture"** by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Alicia Ely Yamin, et al.. This article argues for moving beyond nostalgia for the old global health order to focus on creative innovations and coalitions that ensure equity and Global South agency in a new global health multilateralism.

- **"A Lean World Health Organization for the Global Good"** by Pete Baker et al.. This brief suggests the WHO should articulate a clear vision focusing on its global comparative advantage: **global leadership and convening, global health security, and global public goods**. It recommends rebalancing staffing and resources away from country offices towards these priorities at HQ, and reorienting scaled-down country offices to support WHO's global focus.
- **"Board agrees for UNAIDS to use its reserves for restructuring"**. UNAIDS' executive director can draw up to **\$15 million from its Operating Reserve Fund** to implement activities, including a secretariat restructuring estimated to cost \$32.8 million in 2025 and 2026, to avoid a potential \$8.7 million shortfall in 2026.
- **"Stop TB cuts over a quarter of staff amid shift in US priorities"**. The Stop TB Partnership is undergoing reorganisation and cutting over a quarter of its staff (from 108 to around 70) due to changes in the global health landscape, particularly a shift in U.S. funding priorities which means some work, like diversity, equity, and inclusion activities, can no longer be continued with U.S. funds.
- **"Africa must stop migrants reaching Europe to keep EU cash, plans show"**. The European Commission plans to link EU development aid to African countries to concrete results in stemming migrant flows to Europe, reflecting a hardening approach to migration and aligning with U.S. and U.K. foreign aid strategies.
- **"The Case for Development in 2025: Exploring new narratives for aid in the context of the EU's new strategic agenda"** by C Kumar et al.. This report examines how narratives around official development assistance (ODA) have shifted in Europe and explores new narratives emerging with the EU's priorities, aiming to identify those with the most traction for maintaining robust developmental efforts and ODA spending.
- **"Retire 'Foreign Assistance'"** by J Soeripto et al.. This article advocates for retiring the term "foreign assistance" and the associated mindset, arguing that humanitarian and development assistance should be viewed as a **catalyst for partnership in global stability**, not charity, by using a vocabulary rooted in reciprocity like global health security and mutual investment.
- **"Summing up Sevilla"**. A summary of the outcomes from the Financing for Development (FfD4) conference in Seville highlighted new initiatives on debt, aid, and development finance. Notably, Official Development Assistance (ODA) was only mentioned once in the Sevilla Platform for Action, and then only as part of an OECD commitment to strengthen the process for graduating ODA recipients.
- **"Financing for Development Conference: last word from Seville"**. This report notes an **outsized presence of the private sector at FfD4** (40% of attendees), indicating a "concerning deepening of the private finance first mentality" despite limited demonstrable development impact. It argues that this undervalues public goods and contradicts LMICs' requests for public grant development and climate finance.
- **"Our verdict on FfD4: job not yet done"**. This verdict on FfD4 also highlights the "heavy promotion of private sector-led development," with discussions dominated by blended finance and de-risking. It cites a World Bank Group representative stating that ODA is a "rounding error" compared to the trillions needed for SDGs, used to justify relentless promotion of private investment.
- **"UNAids chief 'shaken and disgusted' by US cuts that will mean millions more deaths"**. Winnie Byanyima, UNAIDS Executive Director, expressed deep concern over U.S. cuts to PEPFAR funding, stating she considered resigning as these cuts threaten to undo decades of progress and risk millions more deaths.
- **"Wellcome CEO Urges Global Health Rethink: 'Science Alone Is Not Enough'"**. John-Arne Røttingen, the newly appointed CEO of Wellcome, stated that the global health funding crisis requires stronger partnerships between governments, researchers, and citizens, and that **"Science is not enough to change the world"** without collaboration and action across society.
- **"Why the EU needs a Special Representative for Global Health"** by L Bengtsson et al.. The authors argue that despite the EU's Global Health Strategy promising to "act with one voice," implementation has been hampered by fragmentation; a Special Representative for Global Health, reporting to the EU's High Representative, could bridge this gap by providing political weight and a mandate for high-level diplomacy and policy coordination.
- **"Global Health Reset: Stopping TB Through Smart Investments"**. A synthesis of a high-level roundtable highlights key discussions on financing TB and other diseases, including the importance of

innovative and blended financing, localization, domestic resource mobilization, and public-private partnerships.

- **"From Seville to Belem to Johannesburg"** by M Mazzucato. Mazzucato argues that major summits in 2025 (FfD4 in Seville, COP30 in Belém, and the G20 in Johannesburg) must be treated as **"links in a chain, not isolated events,"** emphasizing the need for connected, joined-up action within the multilateral order to achieve a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.
- **"Think Global, Fund Global Moving Towards a Healthier Future by Reshaping Global Health Financing"** by Axel R. Pries, Carsten Schicker, Ilona Kickbusch, Marinus Fislage. The authors advocate for a paradigm shift from "Aid to Partnership," proposing that global health should be viewed as a **strategic investment yielding mutual benefits**, rather than merely a humanitarian endeavor.
- **"Setting Norms and Standards in Global Health: Challenges and Opportunities"** by I Bharali, G Yamey et al.. This background paper explores the relevance, historical, ethical, economic, and political dimensions of setting and adopting standards in global health, including the experiences of low- and middle-income countries and the influence of various international actors.

Global Tax Justice

- **"Two percent wealth tax on just 3000 billionaires could raise US\$250b a year: Nobel economists"**. Seven Nobel laureates advocated for **"a minimum tax for the ultra-rich, expressed as a percentage of their wealth,"** noting that billionaires currently pay very little in income tax (0% to 0.6% of their wealth). They argue that taxing overall wealth, not just income, would be effective against tax optimisation, potentially generating around **US\$250 billion annually** from just 3,000 individuals globally.
- **"4 rich Africans reportedly wealthier than half the continent"**. An Oxfam report warns that growing inequality in Africa hinders democracy, stating that the four richest Africans hold \$57.4 billion, more wealth than half of the continent's 750 million inhabitants. Africa's tax systems are nearly three times less effective at redistributing income than the global average, and imposing an additional 1% tax on wealth and 10% on income of the richest 1% could raise \$66 billion annually, enough to close funding gaps for free education and universal electricity access.
- **"How the UN Model Tax Treaty shapes the UN Tax Convention behind the scenes"**. This report analyses changes made to the UN Model Convention (2025 update), which serves as a template for bilateral tax treaties, particularly for Global South countries, suggesting these changes may indicate the direction of upcoming negotiations on the UN Tax Convention.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) & Primary Health Care (PHC)

- **African Leaders and Aid Cuts:** African leaders are confronting "brutal" donor pullbacks, viewing them as a potential "wake-up call" to break dependency on aid.
- **Uganda's Domestic Health Funding Plan:** A World Bank-led report finds that Uganda can boost annual health spending by US\$1.6 billion through tax reforms, budget reprioritization, and efficiency improvements, aiming to reduce donor dependence and curb corruption to achieve universal health coverage.
- **Corruption in Health Systems:** A WHO discussion document estimates that **up to 7% of government health spending (an estimated \$441 billion annually) may be lost to corruption**, contributing to 76 million lost DALYs (Disability-Adjusted Life Years).
- **Men's Health Policies:** It is argued that as governments work towards UHC, **men's health must be recognized as a fundamental issue**, not a peripheral consideration.

PEPFAR, HIV/AIDS Updates, and Global Health Cuts

- **PEPFAR Budget Cuts:** Budget cuts are looming over PEPFAR, the world's largest bilateral program for HIV/AIDS, raising concerns about undoing two decades of progress. Experts note that while some countries might wean off support, others will need more time or continued aid.

- **Impact of Cuts:** U.S. funding cuts are forcing specialized HIV clinics across Africa to close, leading to services only being available in crowded public health facilities, which deters people due to fear of stigma. New studies indicate significant impacts: in Mozambique, a 44% reduction in testing for children; in Johannesburg, an 8.5% decrease in testing, 31% decline in HIV diagnoses, and 30% reduction in treatment initiations; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, an estimated **150,000 people will lose access to HIV treatment and prevention**. A modeling study suggests the funding freeze for prevention services in sub-Saharan Africa could lead to **over 6,600 new HIV infections over a year**.
- **UNAIDS Warning:** UNAIDS warns that an **additional six million new HIV infections and four million AIDS-related deaths could occur between 2025 and 2029** if U.S.-supported HIV treatment and prevention services collapse, calling it a "ticking time bomb". External funding financed a large percentage of HIV prevention in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and MENA, and many programs have now stopped completely.
- **Domestic Funding Limitations:** While some low- and middle-income countries have increased domestic HIV budgets, the average increase is insufficient to replace international funding. Factors like debt distress, slow economic growth, and underperforming tax systems limit the fiscal space for many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Call for Global Action:** There is a call for creditors for African countries to restructure or cancel some debt, given that Africa will pay \$89 billion in debt this year, double the \$43 billion in U.S. aid before cuts (excluding Ukraine and Israel support). Activists are calling on countries like **China, India, and Thailand to step in** to fill the void left by U.S. funding cuts, given their capacity to manufacture HIV drugs and strong economies.
- **New HIV Prevention Drug (Lenacapavir):** Gilead formalized an agreement with The Global Fund to provide its HIV prevention drug, lenacapavir (Yeztugo), to up to **2 million people in low- and middle-income countries at a "no profit" price**. Notably, this deal does **not include PEPFAR**, reflecting the Trump Administration's cuts to foreign aid. The Global Fund itself faces budget concerns and needs more resources to fulfill this commitment, as it traditionally received substantial funding from PEPFAR, and other wealthy countries have also cut aid.
- **Criminalization of High-Risk HIV Groups:** UNAIDS reports record levels of criminalization worldwide for people at higher risk of HIV, such as gay men and people who inject drugs, with an increase in countries criminalizing same-sex sexual activity and gender expression.

Trump 2.0

- **"One Big Beautiful Bill Act":** This bill, passed by House Republicans and discussed in the U.S. Senate, is largely viewed unfavorably by adults. It is expected to increase the country's uninsured rate and decrease funding for local hospitals.
- **Tax on Remittances:** The bill includes a tax on remittances, which is estimated to **reduce cash to migrant families by billions of dollars annually**. Experts argue this tax is based on flawed assumptions and would harm migrants and the U.S. economy, disregarding migrants' economic, social, and cultural contributions.
- **Lobbying by Poorest Countries:** Some of the world's poorest countries, including Somalia, Haiti, and Yemen, are paying millions to lobbyists linked to Donald Trump to offset U.S. cuts to foreign aid. Many are also bartering crucial natural resources in exchange for humanitarian or military support.
- **USAID Cuts:** USAID programs are facing significant cuts, with Colombia losing 82%, Kenya 46%, and Nepal 100% of their U.S. funding. These cuts threaten to reverse public health gains, for example, a 53% reduction in HIV cases in Nepal. Specifically, **lifesaving USAID awards totaling \$2.5 billion (with a total estimated cost of \$4.2 billion)** across maternal and child health, humanitarian assistance, vaccines, and pandemic surveillance have been canceled, leading to concerns that people are already dying and the annual death toll may amount to half a million lives.
- **Impact on Blood Services:** U.S. federal support pullbacks for national blood transfusion services in LMICs are causing dire consequences, with countries like Kenya warning of a collapse in blood services. These cuts reflect a broader trend of major donors gradually pulling back support for blood services, historically tied to HIV services, with limited transition planning. Cuts to family planning programs also threaten to compound the crisis by increasing unintended pregnancies and risks like postpartum hemorrhage, which requires safe blood.

PPPR

- **Pandemic Talks and Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS):** The next phase of cementing the WHO's pandemic agreement has resumed, with the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) tasked with negotiating an **annex on a PABS system**. This system will define how information about pathogens with pandemic potential is shared and how those who share it will benefit from developed products. The PABS annex needs to be completed by April 17, 2026.
- **Africa's Outbreak Response:** A new study confirms the critical role of international health teams in strengthening outbreak response across Africa but highlights the need for more strategic and locally tailored support models for long-term sustainability.
- **Bird Flu (H5N1):** There's concern that while there's quiet on the American front for H5N1, it may be because "We just stopped looking for it" rather than a true decline in infections.
- **New Vaccine Development:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is quietly looking at developing two new vaccines for Marburg virus and Sudan ebolavirus. Moderna is also developing the first mRNA vaccine for Marburg, showing promise in animal trials.
- **Mpox in Africa:** While cases are declining in Sierra Leone, Africa faces a **shortage in mpox vaccine funding**, despite ample doses being available for purchase. The outbreak continues to intensify across the continent, with new epicenters emerging, fueled by a more transmissible strain (clade 1b), porous borders, and weak surveillance. Less than 1.3 million doses have arrived out of an estimated 6 million needed for a continent-wide response, and diagnostics remain a critical bottleneck. Urgent lessons include decentralizing diagnostics, escalating vaccine availability and localized production, leveraging trusted voices for communication, diversifying health financing, and engaging communities.
- **World Zoonoses Day:** The source emphasizes that **animal health is public health**, highlighting that preventing zoonotic diseases is over ten times cheaper than dealing with the consequences (estimated direct cost of \$212 billion annually from loss of life, versus \$20 billion for preventative measures). It notes that the recently adopted pandemic agreement is **missing any mention of veterinary medicine and animal health**, which could hinder its aim to prevent pandemics.

Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

- **Commodity Financing:** A call for developing a robust field of "commodity financing" is made to build sustainable domestic systems for assuring access to essential medicines and products. This involves developing a conceptual framework, convening global stakeholders, training experts, and establishing peer learning networks.
- **First Malaria Medicine for Newborns:** The first malaria treatment for newborns and young infants (Coartem Baby from Novartis) has been approved by Swiss regulatory authorities, paving the way for rapid approval and rollout in eight African countries (which accounted for nearly half of 2023's estimated malaria cases). Novartis has committed to providing it largely on a not-for-profit basis.
- **Pharmaceutical Waste Management:** Inadequate last-mile pharmaceutical waste management is identified as a neglected threat, leading to pharmaceutical residues in the environment with possible adverse effects on ecosystems, communities, and public health. It constitutes a considerable health, ecological, and social challenge requiring an interdisciplinary and integrated systems approach.
- **Safe Blood Access:** Amid declining global aid and U.S. federal support cuts, access to safe blood in LMICs is at risk of falling through the cracks, disrupting critical operations. Historically, major donors have pulled back support for blood services, and new U.S. cuts to family planning programs threaten to compound this crisis by increasing risks like postpartum hemorrhage.
- **Equitable Access to Medicines Resolution:** The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution declaring **"fast, equitable and unhindered access to medicines" as part of everyone's right to health**. Nine EU countries on the council abstained after an unsuccessful push to include language qualifying technology transfer as being on "voluntary and mutually agreed terms," citing concerns about protecting industry and the resolution going beyond the Human Rights Council's mandate.

Planetary Health

- **Climate Tipping Points:** Experts warn that the **window to avoid irreversible climate impacts is "rapidly closing,"** calling for "immediate, unprecedented action" from policymakers worldwide,

especially at COP30 in Brazil. Global warming is expected to exceed 1.5C within a few years, putting billions at risk from climate tipping points. Earth system risks, such as the collapse of ice sheets, Amazon rainforest dieback, and Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) shutdown, have reached a "global catastrophic" level. Tipping points need to be explicitly on the agenda for COP30.

- **Climate Necropolitics:** The concept of "climate necropolitics" is introduced, describing politics of death where those in power don't have to care who lives or dies, applied to climate change.
- **Plastics Pollution Treaty:** The U.S. government is pushing back against measures to tackle the ever-growing production of plastics in a new global treaty, with key talks failing to produce a breakthrough ahead of next month's negotiations in Geneva. Worldwide consumption of plastics is surging, and the UN treaty aims to curb this, with less than 10% of plastic waste currently being recycled.
- **Climate Finance:** The Seville Commitment from FfD4 integrates climate finance within a broader development finance framework, moving beyond previous acknowledgements to actively call for resources for implementation.

Conflict/War & Health

- **BCG and Gaza Plan:** The consulting firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG) was involved in a modelled plan to "relocate" Palestinians from Gaza, which calculated relocation outside Gaza to be \$23,000 cheaper per Palestinian than providing support within Gaza during reconstruction. Save the Children suspended its partnership with BCG over this involvement, with the charity's chief stating they were "appalled and deeply disturbed". WHO also has a new \$4.2 million contract pending with BCG, following a previous \$2.8 million spent on WHO's restructuring. BCG stated that two former partners engaged secretly in this Gaza cost assessment without BCG's knowledge or approval.
- **Sudan Civil War:** Mass atrocities, famine, attacks on healthcare, and sexual and ethnically targeted violence continue to grip North Darfur as rebels prepare an assault on El Fasher.
- **Sexual Violence in Conflict:** Israeli legal and gender advocates have called on the UN to hold Hamas accountable for the systematic use of sexual violence as a "tactical weapon of war" during the October 7, 2023, attacks and in the course of holding hostages.

Reports and Collections

- **UN Global Risk Report:** This report identifies "**Global Vulnerabilities**"—risks where institutions are underprepared, clustering across political, technological, societal, and environmental domains. **Climate change inaction is the top risk**, while a "new pandemic" is ranked 12th.
- **BMJ Collection on Lived Experience as Expertise:** This collection highlights the power of recognizing lived experience (knowledge gained by being a patient, caregiver, or relative) as essential expertise to transform healthcare. It advocates for full, not tokenistic, engagement of people with lived experience. It also stresses that the decolonization of global health must include civil society, remedying power and resource imbalances experienced by African non-governmental organizations.

Miscellaneous

- **World Bank Income Classifications (FY26):** The World Bank's update shows a shift over time, with low-income countries decreasing from 30% in 1987 to 12% in 2024, and high-income countries increasing from 25% to 40%. Namibia was the only country to move downward this year, from upper-middle to lower-middle income.
- **African Families and Nuclear Family Concept:** The notion of the nuclear family (married heterosexual couple with biological children) is described as **not indigenous to Africa** but imported and imposed through colonialism, missionary influence, and capitalist restructuring, and is being pushed by right-wing moralists as an ideal path.
- **Global Consensus on Data:** The Financing for Development conference outcome document shows real consensus among UN member states on data, urging governments to strengthen national data and statistics systems and donors to support national platforms, not parallel ones.
- **ICC Warrant for Taliban Leader:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for the Taliban's supreme leader for the persecution of women, hailed by rights activists.

- **Anaemia in South Asia:** Anaemia remains a pervasive health crisis in South Asia, disproportionately affecting the poorest women and girls, with 18 million more cases projected by 2030, underscoring the need for urgent action. The region is the "global epicentre" of anaemia among adolescent girls and women, impacting maternal outcomes and economic participation.