

# IHP news 863: AI summary & 20 key reads of the week

## Introduction: The Dawn of a New Architecture

The current global health landscape is witnessing a profound shift, underscored by discussions at the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos regarding the "Dawning of the New Global Health Architecture". This "dawn" occurs against a backdrop of extreme economic inequality; **Oxfam** reports that the 12 richest billionaires now possess more wealth than half the world's population, with billionaire wealth reaching a record **\$18.3 trillion** in 2025. While leaders discuss prosperity within planetary boundaries, the environmental impact of the summit itself—highlighted by a tripling of private jet flights—reflects a disconnect from the era of "global water bankruptcy". There is an urgent call for a global movement to address these blatant injustices and move beyond the "fake news" of stakeholder capitalism.

## Feat article

In the **Featured Article**, Dr Vasundhara Rangaswamy and colleagues advocate for elevating **Scrub Typhus (ST)** on the global health agenda. ST is a neglected vector-borne disease affecting one billion people globally, causing one million illnesses annually. Despite a case fatality rate that can reach **70%** without treatment and its presence across the "Tsutsugamushi triangle" and beyond, it remains absent from the **WHO's vector-borne disease list**. The authors argue that ST must become a notifiable disease, particularly in India, as climate change and human mobility alter the vector's spatiotemporal nature.

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## Highlights of the Week

### WHO Pandemic Agreement & Pathogen Access (PABS): new round of negotiations

Negotiations for the world's first **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS)** system resumed in Geneva with a looming May deadline. Tensions are high as the US pursues **bilateral agreements** with African nations, exchanging health aid for pathogen access—a move seen as a direct challenge to the multilateral PABS framework. The pharmaceutical industry seeks "legal certainty" through a rules-based system to avoid multiple national obligations under the Nagoya Protocol.

### More on PPPR & Global Health Security

**Africa CDC** has officially lifted the status of **Mpox** as a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS). Simultaneously, talks are advancing regarding the **Africa CDC–EU collaboration** on health security, focusing on the new Global Health Resilience Initiative to ensure concrete results across the continent.

### Run-up to WHO Executive Board Meeting (158th Session)

The upcoming Executive Board meeting will address critical **governance and financing reforms**. WHO is proposing a multi-stakeholder, inter-agency process for Global Health Architecture reform, similar to the ACT-Accelerator. Discussions will also cover member state-led reforms, cost recovery mechanisms, and the timeline for proposing resolutions.

## Davos: Analysis and Reports

Davos 2026 marks a "fundamental reset" as leadership shifts from Klaus Schwab to figures from the **finance and pharmaceutical sectors**, such as Larry Fink (BlackRock) and André Hoffmann (Roche). Critics argue the forum remains a "theatre" without binding accountabilities. The **Oxfam report** highlights that billionaires are now **4,000 times more likely** than ordinary citizens to hold political office, suggesting a drift towards "predatory capitalism".

## Davos & Global Health

Gavi's leadership promotes "**minilateralism**"—mission-driven coalitions—as a workaround for declining multilateralism. Key initiatives launched include:

- **Horizon 1000:** A **\$50 million** partnership between the Gates Foundation and OpenAI to roll out AI in 1,000 African health clinics.
- **Funding Gaps:** A **\$200 billion** shortfall in global health funding is identified, with AI suggested as a "lifeline" to reduce system waste.
- **Davos Compact on AMR:** Over 50 organisations have backed this call to action to tackle antimicrobial resistance.

## Reimagining Global Health and Cooperation

Experts suggest four paradigm shifts: recognising changing disease burdens, **decentralising power** from Geneva/DC to regions, modernising institutions, and increasing domestic financing. Sania Nishtar calls for a "**Global Health Leap**," urging institutions to merge operations at the "last mile" to focus on global public goods and fragile contexts.

## Bilateral Health Agreements & AFGHS

The **America First Global Health Strategy (AFGHS)** is reshaping US-African relations. Critics warn it redistributes political and legal risks onto national health systems while external powers retain control over priorities. There is a call for African countries to secure **reciprocal rights** over data and countermeasures.

## More on Global Health Governance and Funding

The **US formal withdrawal from the WHO** is complete, though the US remains in arrears for **\$278 million** in dues. While some argue the US should shape the next Director-General selection from the outside, others warn that bilateral deals cannot replicate WHO's disease surveillance intelligence. Africa, meanwhile, is responding with "assertive leadership" and increased domestic budget allocations.

## UHC & PHC

The **UHC Knowledge Hub** was launched in Tokyo to foster finance-health collaboration. However, financial barriers remain acute; in Sub-Saharan Africa, **out-of-pocket (OOP) payments** disproportionately affect women. In Nigeria, the "Sector-Wide Approach" (SWAp) faces challenges as government health spending remains well below the 15% Abuja target.

## Lancet Commission: India's Citizen-Centred System

A new Commission advocates for a **rights-based, citizen-centred model** in India. It argues that India's UHC barriers are no longer about political will or funding, but rather inefficiencies, poor governance, and uneven quality of care. India is positioned to be a stronger voice for the **Global South** in a multipolar order.

### Trump 2.0 Impact

One year after US aid cuts, modelling suggests over **750,000 deaths** (mostly children) are linked to the funding hiatus. Legal battles continue over the administration's "chainsaw" approach to foreign aid, while some former USAID professionals are now running for political office to protect the sector's future.

### Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

There is a strategic shift in NCD priorities, with **Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)** now elevated alongside cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Additionally, **smokeless tobacco** use is surging in Southeast Asia, becoming a leading contributor to preventable oral cancer.

### Commercial Determinants of Health

A recent preprint claims nearly **one-third of social media research** has undisclosed ties to industry, suggesting that commercial interests may be skewing scientific findings.

### Decolonising Global Health

The controversy over a Hepatitis B vaccine trial in Guinea-Bissau highlights the ongoing lack of **epistemic authority** in Africa, as African publics often learn about their own research governance through Western media. Aid dependency is framed as a fundamental question of **dignity** and self-respect.

### Access to Medicines and Vaccines

- **Guinea-Bissau:** A controversial US-funded Hepatitis B trial has been **suspended/cancelled** due to ethical challenges and a lack of local technical resources for approval.
- **EU Critical Medicines Act:** African stakeholders warn this "Europe First" policy could drain global supplies and undercut Africa's nascent pharmaceutical industry.
- **Cholera:** A new generation of vaccines (from South Korea, India, and South Africa) offers hope for more equitable protection.

### Planetary Health

For every \$1 spent protecting nature, **\$30 is spent destroying it**. The world has entered an era of "global water bankruptcy," with **75% of the population** living in water-insecure areas. Furthermore, just 32 fossil fuel firms are responsible for half of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### Human Resources for Health

The world faces a shortage of **one million midwives**, with 90% of this gap in low- and middle-income countries. Universal access to midwife-delivered care could save **4.3 million lives** annually by 2035.

### Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

New research shows the **HPV vaccine** creates a "herd effect," protecting even unvaccinated women from precancerous growths. WHO emphasises that its 2030 cervical cancer targets (90-70-90) are operational milestones necessary for long-term elimination.

## Reports, Papers, and Miscellaneous

- **SDGs:** New evidence demonstrates the "co-benefits" of health systems for poverty reduction, education, and climate action.
- **Leprosy:** WHO has renewed its commitment to a **leprosy-free world** ahead of World Leprosy Day, focusing on essential access to treatment.

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## 20 Key Reads of the Week

1. **Oxfam: Resisting the Rule of the Rich**
  - **Summary:** This flagship report reveals that billionaire wealth reached a record **\$18.3 trillion** in 2025, warning that extreme wealth concentration is enabling unchecked political influence.
  - **URL:** [Oxfam Report](#)
2. **Lancet Commission: A Citizen-Centred Health System for India**
  - **Summary:** A transformative roadmap advocating for a **rights-based model** that prioritises community participation and government accountability to achieve UHC by 2047.
  - **URL:** [Lancet Commission](#)
3. **Featured: Time to Put Scrub Typhus Higher on the Agenda**
  - **Summary:** Public health experts argue that **Scrub Typhus**, affecting one billion people, must be added to the WHO's vector-borne disease list to improve global vigilance.
  - **URL:** [IHP Featured Article](#)
4. **Geneva Health Files: The Price of Legal Certainty for PABS**
  - **Summary:** A "must-read" analysis on the **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing** system, examining what the pharmaceutical industry is willing to pay for a simplified multilateral framework.
  - **URL:** [Geneva Health Files](#)
5. **Global Health Leap: An Urgent Call to Action (Sania Nishtar)**
  - **Summary:** Dr Nishtar calls for a radical "leap" to reform the fragmented global health architecture by focusing on **country-level needs** rather than institutional survival.
  - **URL:** [The Lancet Viewpoint](#)
6. **Rebalancing Risk under the America First Global Health Strategy**
  - **Summary:** This analysis examines how US bilateral deals redistribute **political and epidemiological risk** onto African health systems while keeping control external.
  - **URL:** [Global Policy Journal](#)
7. **The Human Cost: One Year of the US "Chainsaw" on Aid**
  - **Summary:** Sophisticated modelling suggests that over **750,000 deaths**, primarily of children, have occurred following the US decision to pause and cut global health funding.
  - **URL:** [Health Policy Watch](#)
8. **The Old Aid Model is Dead (Raj Kumar)**

- **Summary:** An analysis predicting that 2026 will be the year **billionaire philanthropy** and private capital formally compete with government aid at the scale of ODA.
- **URL:** [Devex Analysis](#)

**9. Nature Medicine Commission on Dialysis Policy in LMICs**

- **Summary:** Using Thailand's "PD-First" policy as a case study, this report offers lessons on expanding **equitable access to kidney care** within national UHC frameworks.
- **URL:** [Nature Medicine Report](#)

**10. Not All Diseases Are Equal: Reshaping the NCD Agenda**

- **Summary:** Habib Benzian critiques a new WEF report for elevating **Chronic Kidney Disease** while potentially sidelining other high-burden conditions.
- **URL:** [Health Policy Watch Article](#)

**11. History Marches Past Davos (Mariana Mazzucato)**

- **Summary:** Mazzucato argues that without **binding conditionalities** and accountability frameworks, Davos remains a "theatre" for performative stakeholder capitalism.
- **URL:** [Project Syndicate](#)

**12. Guterres: Powerful Forces Undermining Global Cooperation**

- **Summary:** In a landmark speech for the UN's 80th anniversary, the Secretary-General makes an impassioned plea for **multilateralism** amid drastic funding cuts.
- **URL:** [The Guardian](#)

**13. Four Paradigm Shifts for Global Health Reform**

- **Summary:** Leading experts suggest decentralising power from Geneva and DC to regions, creating an increasingly **multipolar world** of disease control.
- **URL:** [The Lancet Comment](#)

**14. Africa's Response to a Changing Financing Ecosystem**

- **Summary:** Dr Ebere Okereke warns that **domestic resource mobilisation** must be paired with deep governance reform to avoid "pouring money into black holes".
- **URL:** [Global Health Hub Germany](#)

**15. Davos Post-Schwab: Leadership Reset**

- **Summary:** An analysis of the power shift from "grand visions" to the **disciplined pragmatism** of the finance and pharmaceutical sectors at the WEF.
- **URL:** [Devex Opinion](#)

**16. Era of 'Global Water Bankruptcy' is Here**

- **Summary:** A UN report declares that **75% of the world's population** lives in water-insecure areas, threatening peace and social cohesion.
- **URL:** [The Guardian Environment](#)

**17. Smokeless Tobacco and Oral Cancer in Global Perspective**

- **Summary:** This perspective highlights that **smokeless tobacco** use is surging in Southeast Asia, becoming a preventable leading cause of cancer.
- **URL:** [NEJM Perspective](#)

**18. Why Africa Speaks Through Others: Epistemic Authority**

- **Summary:** A critical look at why African research governance is still often validated through **Western media and journals** rather than continental platforms.
- **URL:** [Koum Besson on LinkedIn](#)

**19. The Future of the WHO: Mapping a Path to Restoration**

- **Summary:** CSIS explores how the US might influence the next **Director-General selection** from outside the organization while mapping a return by 2027.
- **URL:** [CSIS Analysis](#)

**20. EU Critical Medicines Act: African Supply Concerns**

- **Summary:** While the EU seeks "health sovereignty," critics warn that its **stockpiling mandates** could drain global markets and undercut Africa's pharmaceutical industry.

- **URL:** [Health Policy Watch](#)

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