

# IHP News 867: AI summary & key reads of the week

## Introduction: "Let's Get on Our Horses"

The newsletter opens by framing 2026 as the Chinese "**Year of the Fire Horse**," symbolising optimism and the need for action following a period of transformation. Key focus areas include the **39th African Union (AU) summit**, where the principle of regional leadership and global support for health sovereignty took centre stage. In Geneva, the **WHO Director-General (DG) race** has effectively begun, with rumours circulating about a "unicorn" candidate who possesses both political navigation skills and technical discipline. Concurrently, the **Munich Security Conference** highlighted the rising threat of **AI misuse** in bio-security and a concerning trend where European nations are following the US in making deep cuts to global health investments. Notable publications highlighted include **Seye Abimbola's** work on "the evidence of things not seen" and new frontiers in health policy and systems research.

## Featured Article: WHO Process for Global Health Architecture Reform

**Daniel López Acuña** examines the strategic reform of the **Global Health Architecture (GHA)**. The WHO Executive Board recently approved a decision for the Director-General to design an **inclusive, Member State-led process** to support this transformation, which will be considered at the 79th World Health Assembly. This initiative arises amidst a proliferation of reform proposals from various global actors. For the WHO's proposal to be successful, it must be **credible, objective, and binding**, leading to a multilateral consensus that makes the global health system more efficient and effective.

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## Highlights of the Week

### African Union Summit & Health

Discussions at the AU summit emphasised **health security sovereignty**, moving away from foreign aid toward self-sufficient, homegrown systems. A major commitment was made to produce **60% of Africa's health products locally by 2040** via the launch of **ACHIEVE Africa** and the African Pooled Procurement Mechanism. Leaders also called for the deployment of **two million community health workers (CHWs) by 2030**, noting that every \$1 invested yields up to \$19 in economic returns. Furthermore, there is an urgent call for 24 more countries to ratify the **African Medicines Agency (AMA) treaty** to harmonise continental regulations. UN Secretary-General Guterres highlighted the injustice of the current financial system, noting that Africa loses more to debt servicing than it receives in aid.

### Global Fund Board Meeting

The Board welcomed an **Eighth Replenishment total of \$12.64 billion**, though France's decision to cut its funding by **58%** sent shockwaves through the partnership. Strategic shifts are being implemented to focus resources on the **poorest countries with the heaviest disease burdens** and to support their transition toward self-reliance. Despite the funding, observers warn that shrinking aid and "HIV exceptionalism" ending may risk shifting burdens onto African countries and weakening community-led responses.

## Munich Security Conference (MSC)

The MSC focused heavily on "**AI-enabled threats**," with CEPI warning that rapid progression in AI could allow for the creation of **synthetic pathogens**. A report from the **ONE Campaign** highlighted a "security paradox": OECD heavyweights now spend **seven times more on defense than on development**, which critics argue undermines long-term global stability. While development-related panels were present, they often remained in "silos," failing to integrate fully into the broader security dialogue.

## Reform & Reimagining of Global Health

David Clarke argues that the current reform debate lacks a foundation in "**state capacity**"; if countries cannot institutionally spend the budgets they have, sovereignty remains rhetorical. Other analysts note that while there is consensus on *what* needs to change, there is a lack of "**decision-making courage**" regarding *how* to implement these transitions and who should be held accountable if they fail. The divide is increasingly defined by **Northern anxiety vs. Southern agency**.

## PABS Negotiations & PPPR

The latest round of **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS)** negotiations revealed a "trust deficit" between the Global North and South. The central conflict remains whether benefit sharing should be **mandatory or voluntary**. Public health experts are also concerned about **US bilateral deals** to exchange pathogen data for aid, which may undermine the multilateral system. CEPI launched its "**CEPI 3.0**" **strategy**, seeking \$2.5 billion to develop vaccines for known and emerging threats within 100 days.

## US Bilateral Health Agreements & US Global Health Strategy

Despite the Trump administration's proposed cuts, the **US Congress** passed legislation that preserves core global health investments, indicating enduring bipartisan support. However, the bill codifies the "**America First Global Health Strategy**," shifting authority toward the Department of State and requiring clear benchmarks for country ownership. Critics argue that the strategy's lack of focus on **HIV prevention** and its pressure on countries to wind down **Cuban medical missions** could reverse years of progress.

## More on Global Health Governance & Funding/Financing

The race for the next **WHO Director-General** is intensifying, with at least 12 rumoured candidates. The "ideal" profile is a **technocrat/reformer** who can navigate geopolitical divides and regain public confidence. Meanwhile, UN agencies in Geneva are using "**agenda-keeping**" **strategies**—reframing health as a security emergency—to maintain relevance amidst major financial strain.

## Debt Reform & Justice

Lower-income country **debt payments have hit their highest level since 1990**, reaching 19.2% of government revenue in 2025. This crisis is exacerbated by **vulture funds** suing countries like Ethiopia after breakdowns in relief negotiations.

## More on the Aid Cuts & Transition

UK aid cuts are now projected to be even deeper than those of the US, with a planned **34% reduction by 2027** to fund increased military spending. The **Gates Foundation** is currently managing internal fallout and public "sullied" association following released details of Bill Gates' interactions with **Jeffrey Epstein**.

## Trump 2.0

The administration has expanded the **Mexico City Policy** ("Global Gag Rule"), and the **CDC** currently lacks a Senate-confirmed director. Staff at the **NIAID** have reportedly been instructed to scrub terms like **"biodefense" and "pandemic preparedness"** from official websites as research priorities shift.

## SRHR

A WHO report revealed that **60% of maternal deaths** occur in settings affected by conflict or institutional fragility. The maternal mortality ratio in conflict zones is **five times higher** than in stable countries. Additionally, sharp aid cuts from the US and UK are putting global efforts to eliminate **female genital mutilation (FGM)** at risk.

## Human Resources for Health

Experts argue that **training without jobs is a waste of aid**, noting that many countries have a "paradoxical surplus" of unemployed health workers because they lack the **fiscal space** to hire them. Efforts are underway in sub-Saharan Africa to eliminate **"ghost workers"** and reinvest those funds into frontline CHWs.

## Social Determinants of Health

The TB epidemic continues to thrive due to a **lack of political resolve** to invest in social protection. A rights-based approach is needed to provide benefits to every TB-vulnerable household.

## Conflict/War/Genocide & Health

A *Lancet* study indicates that the **Gaza death toll** in the early part of the conflict was substantially higher than official reports, with violent deaths exceeding initial figures. There are calls to **re-examine famine classification thresholds**, as current IPC mortality-based systems may mask the early effects of starvation in urbanised populations.

## Planetary Health

The Trump administration is reportedly pressuring nations to withdraw a **UN climate proposal** led by Vanuatu, arguing that reparations for climate damage pose a "major threat to U.S. industry".

## AI & Health

Guidelines are being proposed to **stop using AI imagery** in global health communications to protect the dignity of vulnerable populations. Instead, organisations are encouraged to commission **local image makers** to reimagine power dynamics.

## Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

The US is rumoured to be exploring "**AmeriQual**," a potential alternative to the WHO prequalification process, which could cause massive disruption to global procurement systems. In West Africa, Guinea-Bissau halted a **US-funded vaccine study** aiming to link hepatitis B vaccines to autism, which the WHO labelled as unethical.

### Key Publications, Issues & Reports

The field of **HPSR** is identifying "new frontiers," including more domestic financing and engagement with new health development actors. The *Lancet Global Health* March issue highlights the "**tuberculogenic environment**"—the upstream social and economic factors that sustain the TB pandemic.

### Miscellaneous

The global health community mourns the passing of **David Legge**, a methodical genius and leader of the **People's Health Movement**. Finally, UN human rights experts have demanded accountability following the "Epstein Files," which reveal a possible **global criminal enterprise** involving the systematic exploitation of women and girls.

## Some key reads of the week

### Featured Article

1. **Daniel López Acuña** - [The WHO process for supporting the reform of the global health architecture \(IHP\)](#). This article outlines the strategic importance of the WHO's Member State-led process for global health reform.

### African Union Summit & Health

2. **Africa CDC** - [Presidential Declaration on Advancing Local Manufacturing](#). African leaders commit to local manufacturing of 60% of health products by 2040.

### Global Fund Board Meeting

4. **Global Fund** - [Global Fund Board Welcomes Final Eighth Replenishment Outcome](#). The partnership confirms \$12.64 billion for the next cycle with a focus on self-reliance.
5. **Aidspan** - [New issue on the last GF Board meeting \(GFO\)](#). This issue warns that shrinking aid risks shifting burdens onto African countries and weakening community responses.

### Munich Security Conference

6. **The Telegraph** - [AI could be used to trigger a new pandemic](#). Intelligence chiefs are warned that AI progression makes the creation of synthetic pathogens a rising threat.
7. **ONE Campaign** - [The Security Paradox: More Defense, Less Stability?](#). A report analyzing how prioritizing military spending over development undermines global stability.

## Reform & Reimagining of Global Health

8. **David Clarke** - [The Architecture Debate Is Missing Its Foundation](#) (**Governance Rx**). **Must-read** arguing that the global health reform debate is a state capacity problem rather than just a revenue issue.
9. **Emilie Sabine Koum Besson** - [From Big Names to Hard Choices](#). **Must-read** on the need for decision-making courage to move from prestigious consensus to politically costly implementation.

## PABS Negotiations & PPPR

10. **Suerie Moon** - [Wide gaps on pandemic treaty annex cast doubt on May deadline](#) (**Geneva Solutions**). Analysis of the fundamental divide between mandatory and voluntary benefit sharing.
11. **P. Patnaik** - [In A Bind: G6+ Vs Developing Countries](#) (**Geneva Health Files**). An interrogation of the "trust deficit" and technical flashpoints in the latest pathogen-sharing talks.
12. **Shashika Bandara et al.** - [WHO Pandemic Agreement is only the beginning](#) (**BMJ**). **Must-read** on translating the global agreement into meaningful national policies and tackling equity challenges.

## US Bilateral Health Agreements & Strategy

13. **J. Ratevosian** - [What \\$50 Billion for U.S. Foreign Affairs Changes for Global Health](#) (**Think Global Health**). **Must-read** explaining how new legislation consolidates authority in the State Department and shifts away from HIV exceptionalism.

## Global Health Governance & Financing

15. **Health Policy Watch** - [Want to Become the Next WHO Director-General?](#). **Must-read** analysis of the 12 rumored candidates for the upcoming "unicorn" DG race.
16. **D. Sridhar** - [Trump has pulled the US out of the WHO – here's why that's sheer hypocrisy](#) (**Guardian**). Argues that the U.S. remains dependent on the WHO for global health intelligence despite public rhetoric.

## Debt Reform & Justice

17. **Debt Justice** - [Lower-income country debt payments hit highest level since 1990](#). Highlights how debt payments have hit a 35-year high, consuming 19.2% of government revenue.

## Aid Cuts & Transition

18. **I. Mitchell et al.** - [UK Aid Cuts Now Deeper than the US](#) (**CGD**). Comparison showing that UK aid cuts are projected to outstrip those of the U.S. administration.
19. **Mark Suzman** - [Gates Foundation 'sullied' by Epstein link](#) (**FT**). Reports on internal fallout following the disclosure of correspondence between foundation staff and Jeffrey Epstein.

## Trump 2.0

20. **KFF** - [The Mexico City Policy: An Explainer](#). A critical resource for understanding the administration's expanded "Promoting Human Flourishing" policy.

## SRHR

21. WHO - [Conflict and instability make pregnancy more dangerous](#). Reports that 60% of all maternal deaths globally occur in settings experiencing conflict or fragility.

## Human Resources for Health

22. K. Kubota - [Training without jobs is a waste of aid](#) (BMJ GH). Argues that workforce expansion is blocked by fiscal constraints rather than a lack of trained staff.

## Social Determinants of Health

23. J. Kathiresan & M. Pai - [Social protection for tuberculosis—how can we make it universal?](#) (Lancet Public Health). Calls for political resolve to deliver social protection benefits to every TB-vulnerable household.

## Conflict/War/Genocide & Health

24. M. Spagat et al. - [Violent and non-violent death tolls for the Gaza conflict](#) (Lancet GH). Independent survey showing that violent deaths in Gaza have substantially exceeded official figures.
25. Ingrid de Zwart et al. - [Rethinking current famine classification](#) (Lancet). Experts call for a re-examination of how famine thresholds are set for urbanized populations.

## Planetary Health

26. AP News - [Trump administration urges nations to call for the withdrawal of a UN climate proposal](#). Reports on U.S. objections to a UN proposal for climate damage reparations.

## AI & Health

27. I. Bakelman & K. Buse - [Beyond disclosure: stop using AI imagery in global health](#) (Lancet GH). Proposes an ethical standard to reject AI imagery of vulnerable populations in favor of local creators.

## Access to Medicines

28. Emily Bass - [Is the United States Planning to Replace WHO Prequalification?](#). Discusses a potential "AmeriQual" alternative that could disrupt global public good procurement.

## Key Publications, Issues & Reports

29. Seye Abimbola - [The evidence of things not seen](#) (Health Promotion International). Must-read arguing that structurally determining income and housing should be the central claim of public health.

## Miscellaneous

30. People's Dispatch - [Remembering David Legge: a tribute](#). A celebration of the legacy of the People's Health Movement founding member and methodical genius.