

IHP news 869: AI summary & key reads - American Psycho times, Gates/Epstein & International Women's Day

Introduction

Navigating the "Age of Resource Competition" Kristof Decoster opens with a sense of nostalgia for past dreams of "Global health convergence," contrasting them with the current **"lawless 'Age of Resource Competition'"**. He critiques the double standards of European and "like-minded" leaders that have undermined the post-WWII rules-based order. A primary focus is the **Gates and Epstein files**, where Decoster argues that even if no "smoking gun" exists for individual behavior, the **structural links** between Bill Gates, his Foundation, and Jeffrey Epstein warrant an **independent investigation**. He contends that the global health community cannot ignore this governance crisis, especially as Epstein's involvement in Pakistan's polio campaign has surfaced, potentially fueling **anti-vaccine hysteria**.

Featured Article: India's Diagnostic Boom

Shubham Gupta explores the transformative potential of India's diagnostics sector, which now conducts nearly **one billion laboratory tests annually**. Despite this massive volume, Gupta notes that this data remains largely untapped for public health intelligence. He advocates for systematic aggregation and responsible governance of clinical data to monitor disease trends, anticipate health system pressures, and design **evidence-based policy**, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where health data generation is often slow and resource-intensive.

Highlights of the Week

International Women's Day (8 March)

The global health community is urged to defend the rights of the majority against exclusionary power structures. UN reports warn that **women's rights are regressing** worldwide, with women holding only 64% of the legal rights afforded to men. Philanthropist Sheryl Sandberg highlights that **child marriage** costs the global economy **\$175 billion annually**, yet reducing it by 30% would cost only \$1.3 billion over five years. Alarming, a survey found Gen Z men in some countries are more likely than Baby Boomers to hold traditional, regressive views on gender roles.

Gates & Epstein Files

The sector Bill Gates bankrolls is finding it increasingly difficult to "look away" from his relationship with Epstein. New reports reveal Epstein received **sensitive military intelligence** and reports on Pakistani military operations while facilitating the Gates Foundation's access to the Taliban for polio

eradication efforts. Critics like Tim Schwab argue that elite philanthropy is overdue for a total overhaul and that Gates should be removed from his Foundation.

Global Health Reform & Reimagining (& post-2030)

A new HISP report proposes reforms across five priority areas, including normative guidance and **market shaping**. Discussions are shifting toward "health sovereignty," with South-led coalitions like the **Accra Reset** gaining legitimacy. There is a growing recognition that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is receding from diplomatic toolkits, necessitating a transition toward **reciprocal partnerships** built on mutual interest. Experts warn that "crisis-driven architectures" have entrenched fragility and that countries must restore agency over their own health institutions.

More on Global Health Governance & Financing/Funding

The UN is reviewing its mandate reform to retire or merge outdated mandates. Financing for women's and children's health is under pressure due to rising debt burdens, leading to the creation of a new **PMNCH Working Group on Financing**. The **Novo Nordisk Foundation** is rapidly internationalizing, using massive profits from obesity drugs to fill the gap left by shrinking bilateral aid. Meanwhile, the **Global Fund** is evolving its "NextGen Market Shaping" to help countries transition toward domestic financing while maintaining access to bulk-negotiated prices.

UHC & PHC

A revised SDG indicator for **financial protection** (3.8.2) has dramatically changed the global narrative, revealing that **773 million more people** faced financial hardship in 2019 than previously estimated. Experts emphasize the need for **human-centered design** (HCD) to dismantle siloed, disease-specific care and build resilient, locally driven health systems.

Bilateral Health Agreements & US Global Health Strategy

The US has rapidly signed 24 "**America First**" **bilateral health MOUs**, primarily in Africa and Latin America. These five-year deals transfer financial responsibility to the host countries while demanding **exclusive US access to pathogen information** and infectious disease surveillance networks. While countries like Kenya have signed, **Zimbabwe notably rejected** a \$367 million deal, citing its exploitative and colonial nature. Ethicists warn that trading national health data for funding undermines public trust and risks **data extractivism**.

PPPR & GHS

Africa CDC and the Japan Institute for Health Security have signed a cooperation agreement to strengthen **health security and sovereignty**. There are calls for "feminist pandemic preparedness" to reconcile security needs with the political-economic lives of women. Additionally, researchers warn that sharing pathogen sequence information under the WHO Pandemic Agreement must include **risk mitigation** to protect human genetic "bycatch".

Flu, Measles, Dengue

WHO has updated the Northern Hemisphere seasonal flu vaccine recommendations in response to a new variant. Experts warn that **US anti-vaccine rhetoric** could worsen the global measles crisis. A new **Global Dengue Observatory** has launched to provide real-time estimates of cases across 88 countries.

Trump 2.0

In the US, about 20 states are limiting access to **HIV treatment** due to federal funding shortfalls. Globally, the "**Make Europe Healthy Again**" (**MEHA**) movement is rising, blending anti-vaccine activism with right-wing politics and claims of "medical freedom". Elon Musk has successfully avoided a deposition regarding his role in dismantling the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

NCDs & Commercial Determinants of Health

By 2040, it is projected that **227 million children will be obese**. While GLP-1 medicines are transforming treatment in wealthy nations, they remain scarce in LMICs where obesity rates are growing fastest. Public health advocates argue that the industry-driven focus on "downstream" treatments must not replace "**upstream**" **prevention policies** like sugar taxes and advertising limits.

SRHR

Sex trafficking remains a massive human rights violation, with survivors facing STIs at rates up to **111 times higher** than the general population. In Afghanistan, Taliban restrictions are jeopardizing women's lives by denying emergency healthcare. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies show that mistreatment during childbirth has lasting impacts on women's mental health.

AI & Digital Health

WHO is debating its role in navigating the interface between global health and AI, focusing on **health data governance** and equitable access. Partnerships like Rwanda's deal with Anthropic raise questions about whether such collaborations build domestic capacity or create **long-term dependence** on foreign technology.

Planetary Health

Vanuatu continues to push for a UN climate resolution despite US opposition. New research suggests that "climate shocks," rather than just gradual warming, are the most immediate threat to malaria control in Africa. A major study argues that achieving **global economic convergence** while staying within the 2°C climate target requires "**sobriety**"—including a drastic reduction in working hours and a shift toward immaterial sectors like health and education.

Migration & Health

Experts propose framing the intersection of climate change, migration, and health as a "**syndemic**" to better understand the mutually reinforcing social and biological processes involved.

Conflict/War/Genocide & Health

WHO is distributing emergency supplies for **nuclear or chemical attacks** across the Middle East. In Gaza, aid groups won a court reprieve allowing them to continue operations despite new restrictive registration rules. Experts call for reframing **health systems resilience** in conflict zones by engaging local community-based and faith-based actors rather than just state authorities.

Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

South Africa is bypassing US aid cuts by seeking **local production** of Gilead's long-acting HIV drug, lenacapavir. A new single-dose drug for **sleeping sickness** (acoziborole) has received a positive opinion from European regulators, offering hope for disease eradication by 2030. Meanwhile, African leaders have reaffirmed a commitment to produce **60% of the continent's vaccines locally by 2040**, though structural gaps in navigating regulatory and procurement pathways remain.

Some More Papers, Reports & Publications of the Week

A notable *Lancet* viewpoint argues for a broader concept of "**health justice**" that goes beyond equity to address process fairness and compensatory justice.

Miscellaneous

Parliaments in **Ghana and Senegal** are considering harsher penalties for same-sex relationships, with Senegal potentially doubling the maximum penalty to 10 years in prison.

Some key reads of the week

1. **Buse, Kent.** [International Women's day \(8 March\)](#). *The Lancet*. The global health community is urged to defend the rights of the majority against authoritarian and exclusionary power structures.
2. **UN Women.** [Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls](#). *UN News*. This report warns that discriminatory legal frameworks and social norms are currently silence women's voices and allowing abuse without consequence.
3. **Devex Pro.** [When philanthropy becomes the crisis](#). *Devex*. This article explores how Bill Gates has become a liability for the global development sector he bankrolls following renewed scrutiny of his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein.
4. **Schwab, Tim.** ["The Breakfast Club" lampoons Bill Gates over Epstein apology](#). *Substack*. Schwab argues that elite philanthropy is overdue for a major overhaul and that Bill Gates should be removed from his foundation.
5. **HISP.** [EU and Like-minded Donors' Reflection Process on Reform of the Global Health Architecture](#). *HISP Report*. A new report proposes global reforms across priority areas including normative guidance, financing, and equitable market shaping.
6. **Adeyi, Olusoji & Laxminarayan, Ramanan.** [Regional development goals can improve global health in an era of diminished multilateralism](#). *Nature Health*. This **must-read** argues that countries would be better served by regional goals given the declining global solidarity for Sustainable Development Goals.
7. **Okereke, Eberere.** [From crisis response to country control: Restoring agency and sustainability in global health](#). *PLOS Medicine*. Okereke highlights that sustaining progress requires restoring country agency and moving away from externally concentrated, crisis-driven power structures.
8. **IISD.** [UN80 Revised Draft Resolution on Mandate Implementation Review Available](#). *IISD*. A new UN working group will develop criteria to guide decisions on the renewal, merger, or retirement of various mandates.

9. **Green**, Andrew. [How Novo Nordisk's profits are reshaping global health funding](#). *Devex Pro*. The Novo Nordisk Foundation is internationalising rapidly, using massive obesity drug profits to fill the gaps left by shrinking bilateral aid.
10. **Guo**, Bingqing & Grépin, Karen Ann. [Measurement matters: implications of the newly revised Sustainable Development Goal 3.8.2 financial protection indicator](#). *Lancet Global Health*. A revised indicator reveals that 773 million more people faced financial hardship in 2019 than previously estimated.
11. **Health Policy Watch**. [US Speeds up Signing of Bilateral Health Agreements...](#). *HPW*. The US is rapidly securing bilateral "America First" agreements focused primarily on pathogen surveillance and disease monitoring.
12. **Hirschfeld**, A. & Dieleman, J. [Tracking the "America First" Bilateral Health Agreements](#). *Think Global Health*. This **absolute must-read** assesses the sustainability of cofinancing obligations, revealing significant funding drops for some partner countries.
13. **Moodley**, K. et al. [Data for dollars? The ethics of trading African health data for American investment](#). *Journal of Medical Ethics*. Ethicists warn that tying essential healthcare access to large-scale data-sharing risks undermining public trust and entrenching exploitation.
14. **Africa CDC**. [Africa CDC and Japan Institute for Health Security \(JIHS\) Sign Cooperation Agreement...](#). *Africa CDC*. This cooperation agreement strengthens bilateral collaboration in health security, research, and public health capacity development.
15. **Harman**, Sophie. [Feminist pandemic preparedness: women and the political economy of health security](#). *Security & Dialogue*. Harman explores how women are integrated into preparedness measures to reconcile security needs with their political-economic lives.
16. **Health Policy Watch**. [WHO Updates Flu Vaccine in Response to Rapid Spread of New Variant](#). *HPW*. WHO experts have critically adjusted the Northern Hemisphere seasonal flu vaccine composition to match the dominance of a new variant.
17. **LSHTM**. [First global "early warning system" for dengue launches](#). *LSHTM*. A new online dashboard provides a real-time picture of the global dengue situation across 88 countries for the first time.
18. **New York Times**. [States Move to Limit Access to H.I.V. Treatment](#). *NYT*. Roughly 20 US states are toughening eligibility for HIV drug assistance programs due to federal support shortfalls.
19. **Stat**. [MAHA goes global: Inside the rise of the Make Europe Healthy Again movement](#). *Stat*. Right-wing politicians and medical freedom campaigners in Europe are forming alliances to "reclaim" health and sovereignty from regulators.
20. **Guardian**. [More than 220m children will be obese by 2040 without drastic action](#). *The Guardian*. New figures suggest that by 2040, half a billion children will be overweight, with the fastest growth occurring in low-income nations.
21. **van Schalkwyk**, May C. I. et al. ["Who the hell is upstream pushing them all in?" Reclaiming public health's defining metaphor](#). *PLOS Global Public Health*. This article critiques the individualising use of the "upstream" metaphor and its deflection from the role of powerful commercial actors.
22. **Allan-Blitz**, Lao-Tzu. [The need for improved sexual health among survivors of sex trafficking](#). *The Lancet*. Survivors face profound consequences, including STI rates that are up to 111 times higher than the general population.
23. **Carvalho**, Bianca. [Digital Health and AI in Global Health Governance](#). *Geneva Health Files*. Member states are debating how to balance innovation incentives with equitable access and national data sovereignty at WHO.
24. **Guardian**. [Vanuatu moves forward with UN climate resolution despite Trump opposition](#). *The Guardian*. Vanuatu is pushing for a UN resolution to implement a court ruling that major polluters should pay reparations for climate failure.
25. **Chancel**, Lucas et al. [Planetary Habitability, Global Convergence and Structural Transformation](#). *World Inequality Database*. Achieving global convergence within the 2°C

limit requires "sobriety," including a drastic reduction in working hours and a shift toward immaterial sectors.

26. **Telegraph.** [Emergency supplies for nuclear or chemical attack distributed across Middle East.](#) *The Telegraph*. WHO has disseminated radiation protection and specialist medical training across the region as part of emergency mitigation plans.
27. **Truppa, C. & Marchal, B.** [Getting unstuck: reframing health systems strengthening and resilience in fragile settings.](#) *BMJ Global Health*. This paper advocates for engaging a broader range of local actors, including faith-based and non-state actors, to build resilient systems.