

IHP News 877 – May 1st (AI summary & key reads)

Introduction

The newsletter opens by acknowledging May 1st, framing it as a day to reflect on the need to "liberate time" from the current **capitalist emphasis on work** to avoid ecological collapse and worsening workforce conditions. The concept of "**work austerity**" is proposed as an attractive environmental project that prioritises working less to achieve a better communal life. Amidst this philosophical shift, the newsletter highlights current global health tensions, such as the rise of **humanoid robots and AI scenarios**, which contrast with the "world as it should be". Key events discussed include the **PABS negotiations in Geneva**, where a "landing zone" is sought, and the **World Health Summit in Nairobi**, which focused on reimagining African health systems through practical action. Other major highlights include Ghana's rejection of a US health deal and the **Santa Marta conference**, where nations charted a course for a **fossil fuel phase-out**.

Featured Article

The Feat article discusses the launch of the **Collaborative Learning Network (CLN) on Health Financing and Fiscal Sovereignty in LMICs**. Authors Gebremariam, Khanoba, and Sohail argue that as development assistance for health declines, countries must shift from **aid dependence toward fiscal sovereignty**. This transition is not merely financial but involves a deep transformation in **governance, accountability, and ownership**. The authors critique current technocratic debates that ignore the **political realities** of navigating trade-offs and building coalitions under fiscal constraints. The CLN aims to foster a more grounded conversation on how countries can govern and reallocate resources while maintaining equity and legitimacy in politically contested systems.

Highlights of the Week

Read of the Week Habib Benzian's "Bullshit Bingo" is highlighted for its critique of **global health buzzwords**. The piece explores how ambiguous language in health diplomacy can either be a tool for progress or a shield against it.

World Malaria Day The WHO has prequalified the **first-ever malaria treatment specifically for newborns and infants** weighing 2–5 kg, which is expected to close a significant treatment gap for millions of babies. However, the sector faces a **funding crisis**, with 2024 funding reaching only 42% of the required \$9.3 billion needed for global elimination. Furthermore, **artemisinin partial resistance** is spreading across Africa, posing a threat that could cost over \$1 billion and result in millions of treatment failures by 2060 if alternative therapies are not implemented.

World Immunization Week The role of **National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs)** is emphasised as essential for making evidence-based decisions during eras of budget cuts. Wellcome is notably investing in the **African-led NITAG Support Hub (NISH)** to strengthen these groups across the continent.

Run-up to the World Health Assembly (WHA79) Preparations for the 79th WHA are underway with documents being made available online. The **Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2)** will host policy

debates in early May to allow civil society to engage with critical health equity issues ahead of the assembly.

Resumed Sixth Meeting of the IGWG on the WHO Pandemic Agreement Negotiations on the **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) Annex** continued in Geneva, with consensus remaining elusive. Developed nations proposed a **“hybrid” or “blended” model** that mixes mandatory and voluntary measures for sharing pathogen information. This proposal faced criticism from multiple delegations and was **rejected by the Africa Group**, who argue that it permits access to pathogen materials without guaranteed benefit-sharing contracts. The WHO Director-General has urged countries to find a "landing zone" to avoid leaving member states vulnerable to future emergencies. Critical essays also warn that the system must not be structured solely to **incentivize the pharmaceutical industry**, which contributed to "vaccine apartheid" during Covid-19.

More on PPPR & GHS Data indicates that outbreaks of **lethal haemorrhagic fevers** like Ebola and Marburg are becoming more frequent and widespread, particularly in Africa. To address mass gathering risks, academics at Georgetown University launched a **Health Security Operations Centre** to track threats like measles and Zika during the upcoming World Cup in North America.

Regional World Health Summit Nairobi African leaders declared the **"end of the aid era,"** positioning the continent to move toward financial sovereignty. The **African High-Level Ministerial Committee (AHLMC)** was launched to unify Africa’s voice on global health architecture reform, focusing on governance, local manufacturing, and pandemic preparedness. Despite this rhetoric, audits show that only a few countries, like Tanzania and Sierra Leone, have proposed **new revenue measures** to replace lost aid. Currently, 32 African nations spend more on **external debt servicing** than on healthcare.

More on Global Health Reform & Reimagining Discussions are shifting from inspiration to action, though tension exists between the **WHO-hosted process** and the **Accra Reset**, which has stronger Global South anchoring. The US continues its "America First" approach, engaging on its own terms via **bilateral health compacts**. Experts in *The Lancet* argue that the WHO needs focused, ambitious reform to avoid **irrelevance**, especially as official development assistance declines.

More on Global Health Governance & Funding/Financing The Trump administration has **threatened to withhold UN funding** unless specific "quick win" reforms are met, including cost cuts and blocking Chinese discretionary funds. Additionally, the "Billions to Trillions" narrative for leveraging private sector investment is criticised for **over-promising and failing** to deliver essential services like health and education in the poorest countries. In Senegal, IMF and World Bank influence has historically promoted **austerity and private delivery**, keeping public health spending stagnant.

FfD Forum in New York UN member states adopted the **Sevilla Commitment** as a roadmap to close the \$4 trillion SDG financing gap. However, reports warn that **private capital remains unaffordable** for low-income countries due to high borrowing costs, and ODA for 2025 saw a record 23.1% decline.

Impact Aid Cuts The withdrawal of US HIV assistance is causing **treatment systems to crumble in Zambia**, where the government is ill-prepared to take over procurement for antiretrovirals. In Zimbabwe, aid cuts have disrupted the **community health workforce**. Furthermore, **cholera deaths nearly doubled in Africa** in 2025, a spike linked to the cancellation of US-funded water and sanitation contracts.

Bilateral Health Agreements & US Global Health Strategy **Ghana rejected a bilateral health deal** with the US, citing concerns over the requirement to share sensitive health data. This follows similar

failures in Zimbabwe and Kenya. The US strategy is increasingly viewed as **transactional**, prioritising trade over aid.

Trump 2.0 The US House Appropriations Committee approved a bill proposing **6% cuts** to foreign affairs funding. Simultaneously, an AIDS activist group is suing the administration over a **secret settlement with Gilead** regarding HIV prevention patents.

TB Accelerator Forum The first global TB Vaccine Accelerator Forum reviewed progress on **novel vaccines for adults**, which could offer massive health and economic savings. Research also highlighted the **rapid global rollout** of new drug-resistant TB treatments, achieved through nonprofit-led coordination.

More on Health Emergencies A new disease tracker has been launched to visualize global outbreaks of **vaccine-preventable childhood diseases**.

Covid Six years after the pandemic began, Covid-19 is increasingly viewed as a **manageable respiratory illness** similar to the flu, though it remains a risk for some. Notably, **Gavi discontinued support** for Covid vaccine purchases at the end of 2025.

NCDs A new WHO report shows that while **hepatitis infections and deaths** are dropping, 1.3 million lives were still lost in 2024, with the African region accounting for 68% of new hepatitis B infections. Additionally, **diabetes is the fastest-growing health challenge** in sub-Saharan Africa, exacerbated by weak infrastructure and limited access to medicine.

Human Resources for Health Experts call for urgent action to embed **public health workforce development** into national planning to counter threats from shifting geopolitics and funding.

Women Deliver (Melbourne) CEO Maliha Khan is leading a **transformation of Women Deliver** following internal reckonings with racism and harassment. The conference launched the **Melbourne Declaration**, a shared vision for gender equality rooted in human rights and state accountability.

SRHR Pope Leo signaled a shift by stating that the Catholic Church should prioritise justice and inequality over sexual ethics. In scientific news, studies suggest that **toxic chemicals combined with climate change** are contributing to a global drop in fertility. Fragmented budgets and donor dependence continue to fuel a global **shortage of 1 million midwives**.

Santa Marta Conference (Colombia) A Science Panel for the Global Energy Transition (SPGET) was launched to provide scientific roadmaps for phasing out fossil fuels. President Gustavo Petro warned that the "suicidal" model of capitalism must be abandoned to prevent human extinction. Delegates argued that **addressing debt** is central to any climate transition, as many Global South countries are forced to expand fossil fuel production just to pay interest.

More on Planetary Health The **Loss and Damage Fund** risks running out of money by 2027 without new donations. Meanwhile, the "rush" for **critical minerals** like lithium and cobalt is creating public health crises and plundering indigenous lands in mining regions.

Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies The high cost and limited licensing of the HIV drug **Lenacapavir** is a major flashpoint, with South Africa fighting for local production rights rather than remaining at the mercy of external allocations.

Conflict/War & Health NGOs are calling for a **humanitarian corridor through the Strait of Hormuz** as conflict blocks vital aid deliveries to millions.

AI & Health Discussions are emerging regarding the **geopolitics of health data ownership** and who has access to biomedical datasets shaped by AI superpowers.

Miscellaneous The World Bank launched the **“Fit to Prosper” strategy** for Western and Central Africa to prioritise health investment within constrained fiscal spaces. UNICEF warned that **Afghanistan could lose 25,000 female teachers and health workers** by 2030 due to restrictions on education and employment.

Some key Reads of the Week

1. **Habib Benzian**, "[Habib Benzian – Bullshit Bingo](#)", *Personal Blog*; Explores how global health buzzwords can be either tools for progress or shields against it in diplomacy.
2. **WHO**, "[WHO prequalifies first-ever malaria treatment for newborns and infants](#)", *WHO*; A major step forward involving the prequalification of a specific artemether-lumefantrine formulation for babies weighing 2–5 kg.
3. **HPW**, "[Malaria Funding Crisis and Drug Resistance Compel African Investment](#)", *Health Policy Watch*; African diplomats demand a shift toward health sovereignty as funding reaches only 42% of required global elimination targets.
4. **C Weller**, "[Making Better Vaccine Choices in a Shifting Global Health Landscape](#)", *Health Policy Watch*; Recognises the pivotal role of National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups in guiding evidence-based decisions during budget cuts.
5. **WHO**, "[Preparatory documents for the 79th World Health Assembly](#)", *WHO*; Early access to key reports on UN system collaboration and technical reports ahead of the assembly.
6. **HPW**, "[Developed Countries Propose ‘Hybrid’ Model Ahead of Pandemic Agreement Talks](#)", *Health Policy Watch*; **(Recommended Read)** Analyzes a proposed "hybrid" solution mixing mandatory and voluntary measures for pathogen sharing.
7. **Anjan Wilfrid D. Rosario**, "[The PABS Cheat Sheet; Perspectives from Negotiators](#)", *Geneva Health Files*; Offers essential analysis and negotiator perspectives at the start of a crucial week for the pandemic agreement.
8. **Laura Appleby (quoted)**, "[Why are we seeing more outbreaks of the deadliest diseases?](#)", *The Telegraph*; Data analysis shows filovirus clusters like Ebola and Marburg are becoming more frequent and widespread in Africa.
9. **HPW**, "[African Leaders Declare End of Aid Era at Nairobi World Health Summit](#)", *Health Policy Watch*; **(Must-read Analysis)** Details a unified African position moving from aid dependence toward financial sovereignty despite fiscal challenges.
10. **Jean Kaseya**, "[Reshaping global health architecture: African health sovereignty as the foundation of global health equity and security](#)", *Journal of Public Health in Africa*; Proposes six interlocking reforms to align global health architecture with African sovereignty and epidemiological reality.
11. **Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health**, "[Insights on global health reform discussions](#)", *GHD*; A monthly overview of reform trends, noting a shift from conceptual thinking toward seeking practical action roadmaps.
12. **A Nordström et al**, "[A WHO worth fighting for: the case for focused, ambitious reform](#)", *The Lancet*; **(Must-read)** High-profile experts argue that the WHO needs urgent structural reforms to avoid declining into irrelevance.

13. **Devex**, "[US threatens UN funding halt unless conditions met](#)", *Devex*; Reports on Trump administration memos demanding cost cuts and the rejection of Chinese funds as conditions for UN dues.
14. **IISD**, "[ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum Reaffirms Sevilla Commitment](#)", *IISD*; Reaffirms a global roadmap to close the \$4 trillion SDG financing gap through financial system reform.
15. **The New York Times**, "[AIDS Creeps Back in Parts of Zambia, a Year After U.S. Cuts to H.I.V. Assistance](#)", *The New York Times*; Highlights the crumbling of HIV treatment and prevention systems following the withdrawal of U.S. financial support.
16. **Reuters**, "[Ghana rejects proposed US health aid deal, citing data concerns](#)", *Reuters*; Details Ghana's rejection of a transactional health deal due to requirements for sharing sensitive health data.
17. **Devex**, "[House foreign affairs funding bill takes aim at UN, 6% cuts overall](#)", *Devex*; A newly approved \$47.32 billion bill hits multilateral institutions and global health assistance with significant cuts.
18. **WHO**, "[Global forum takes stock of progress on new TB vaccines](#)", *WHO*; Leaders and funders review implementation preparedness for novel TB vaccines for adults and adolescents.
19. **IHME**, "[Tracking Measles and the World's Vaccine-Preventable Diseases](#)", *Think Global Health*; A weekly visual tracker monitoring outbreaks of nine childhood diseases alongside global shifts in vaccine access.
20. **Helen Branswell**, "[What happened to Covid?](#)", *STAT*; **(Recommended Analysis)** Discusses the subsided threat of Covid-19 and its transition into the broader category of manageable respiratory illnesses.
21. **WHO**, "[Efforts to eliminate hepatitis delivers gains but more action needed](#)", *WHO*; A new report documents progress in reducing infections but notes 1.34 million lives were still lost in 2024.
22. **T Correia et al**, "[No health without workforce: reinforcing public health capacity amidst global shifts](#)", *BMJ Global Health*; Calls for urgent policy action to embed workforce development into national health planning to counter funding shifts.
23. **Maliha Khan (quoted)**, "[The CEO reshaping Women Deliver after its reckoning](#)", *Devex Pro*; Discusses the radical transformation of Women Deliver following internal reckonings with racism and harassment.
24. **Reuters**, "[Pope Leo signals shift away from Catholic Church's focus on sex](#)", *Reuters*; Signals a significant reorientation of Church priorities toward justice and inequality over sexual ethics.
25. **The Guardian**, "[New global panel aims to accelerate move away from fossil fuels](#)", *The Guardian*; Announces a new scientific panel helping nations create roadmaps out of the fossil fuel era.
26. **Climate Change News**, "[New loss and damage fund could run out of money next year](#)", *Climate Change News*; Warns that the new Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage could be exhausted by 2027 without new donations.
27. **C D Kamgain**, "[Lenacapavir and the real access test](#)", *Aidspace*; **(Must-read Analysis)** Analyzes the battle for local production rights for the HIV drug Lenacapavir against restricted licensing.
28. **The Guardian**, "[Calls for humanitarian corridor through strait of Hormuz](#)", *The Guardian*; NGOs warn that the blockade is preventing food and medicine delivery to millions in desperate need.
29. **Nature Medicine**, "[Who owns my health data?](#)", *Nature Medicine*; Discusses how the geopolitics of artificial intelligence is reshaping biomedical datasets and access to them.
30. **World Bank**, "[Regional Launch of 'Fit to Prosper'](#)", *World Bank*; A new strategy provides a framework to help countries prioritize health investments within constrained fiscal spaces.