

IHP 888 – AI summary & key reads

Introduction

The newsletter opens during a significant week for global health diplomacy. In Geneva, the **7th meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG)** has commenced, focusing on the **Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS)** annex of the WHO Pandemic Agreement. Deep divides persist, with the **Africa Group** pushing an assertive equity agenda against the "coercive containment" strategies of wealthier nations. Simultaneously, the **High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** in New York is reviewing SDG progress, which has largely stalled since 2020. UN Secretary-General Guterres has also issued a stark warning regarding **AI governance**, noting that we may be the last generation able to define the terms of human-machine coexistence. Amidst these crises, the concept of "**futural anomie**" is highlighted, suggesting that social and institutional erosion in the North has damaged the capacity for collective vision and progress.

Feat article

The **Featured Article**, "*Disability-Inclusive Universal Health Coverage: The Missing Metric in Africa's Health Financing Reforms*" by **Ikenna Ebiri-Okoro**, addresses a critical gap in health sovereignty efforts. Ebiri-Okoro argues that national Universal Health Coverage (UHC) frameworks, often dictated by donor priorities, frequently fail at the point of delivery for persons with disabilities. The author contends that genuine progress requires UHC to measure inclusion specifically, ensuring that all citizens can access quality care without facing financial ruin or indignity.

Highlights of the Week

PABS Negotiations – A New Round (6-17 July)

The latest round of negotiations for the WHO Pandemic Agreement is characterized by entrenched positions. Key "fault lines" include **conditionality** (whether access to pathogen data can occur before benefit-sharing obligations are met), **differentiation** of user obligations, and **traceability** of data. While some countries advocate for a "hybrid" or "blended" model of information sharing, many delegations are hesitant to make concessions. The **Africa Group and Caribbean countries** are calling for legally binding monetary contributions and technology transfer, while the **European Union** emphasizes preserving private-sector innovation incentives.

Ebola Emergency: WHO/Africa CDC Messages

The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has reached a "grim milestone" with **506 deaths** from the **Bundibugyo strain**, for which no proven treatment exists. High-level meetings between the Presidents of the DRC and South Africa, alongside the Africa CDC, have focused on accelerating response efforts. While over **US\$518 million** is needed for the continental response plan, and significant commitments have been announced, only **21% of funds** have actually been released to teams on the ground.

Ebola Emergency: More Analysis, News Snippets...

Analysts warn that the greatest risk is not just the spread of the current Ebola outbreak, but that it might become **endemic** in Central Africa. The response is further complicated by **misinformation** spreading via messaging apps and potential **strikes** by health workers over poor conditions and unpaid wages. Additionally, recent **US aid cuts** (facilitated by the "Doge" department) have reportedly hindered detection and response programs, leading to significant casualties. Concerns also persist regarding **sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)**, with the WHO emphasizing a "zero tolerance" policy and embedding SEA prevention as a cross-cutting pillar in the current response.

HLPF in New York & SDGs

The 2026 SDG Progress Report reveals a sobering reality: only **36% of targets** are on track, while 15% have regressed below 2015 levels. While gains have been made in internet access and social protection, **one in ten people** still live in extreme poverty, and global refugee populations have doubled in a decade. There is currently a **\$4 trillion annual funding gap** required to meet these developmental goals by 2030.

Global Health Reform, Future of International Cooperation & Post-2030 Brainstorm

Major reform initiatives are underway, including the "**Accra Reset**" and a new WHO-hosted taskforce to align the global health architecture. However, there is significant concern that the **lived experience** of those with chronic conditions is being treated as an "afterthought" in these high-level designs. **UNAIDS** is facing a particularly dire situation, with a massive funding crisis forcing the agency to slash its core budget and staff by over 50%. In the Asia-Pacific region, synthesis reports suggest that "**synergistic solutions**" addressing climate, biodiversity, and pollution are the only way to accelerate SDG progress.

More on Global Health Governance & Funding/Financing

The **Global Fund** and the **US government** have reportedly reached a "path forward" that avoids placing conditions related to the expanded "gag rule" on funding. Meanwhile, the Global Fund's search for a new Executive Director continues under strict confidentiality protocols to protect the process from political interference and leaks. **Japan** is also strengthening its partnership with Africa through **TICAD9**, focusing on institutional support for health financing and African-led accountability mechanisms.

Journey towards Health Sovereignty

Experts argue that "country ownership" is impossible without **fiscal justice**, including debt cancellation and global wealth taxation. Without these, calls for self-reliance are seen as "morally inverted," transferring risk to those least able to absorb it as external financing is withdrawn. Critical steps for change include fixing **budget execution**, legislating credible funding floors, and integrating vertical disease programs into primary care systems.

Trump 2.0, US Global Health Strategy & Bilateral Health Agreements

A **\$166 million health financing deal** between the US and South Sudan has raised concerns regarding its adequacy. Interestingly, a poll found that **75% of Americans**, including many Trump supporters, want a reversal of aid cuts specifically to tackle the Ebola outbreak.

World Cup Football

In the realm of sports and health, researchers argue that **cooling breaks** during major events like the World Cup should be dictated by heat-stress risk and science rather than commercial broadcast schedules.

NCDs & Commercial Determinants of Health

Cancer inequities remain persistent; while survival rates for certain cancers are 85% in rich countries, they drop below 30% in poorer nations. The "**wellness**" industry, now a multi-trillion-dollar sector, is being analyzed for how it promotes neoliberal norms of personal responsibility while often spreading health misinformation.

SRHR

Despite global threats to **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)**, countries like Guyana and Malawi are providing models of progress. Experts emphasize that SRHR should be viewed as **social and economic capital** rather than just a medical necessity.

Planetary Health

An intensifying **Super El Niño** is expected to trigger extreme weather events, exacerbating food insecurity and infectious disease outbreaks worldwide. Women in the informal sector bear a disproportionate burden of **extreme heat**, facing significant health and productivity losses.

Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

Africa's goal for **vaccine sovereignty** is shifting from a focus on building factories to building sustainable markets for their products. There is a call to reprioritize **country-led settings** in HIV prevention, rather than simply accelerating the introduction of new biomedical products like lenacapavir without assessing their long-term sustainability.

Digital Health & AI and Health

The WHO and France have issued a joint call for urgent **digital regulation** to protect youth from "addictive" platform designs and harmful marketing. UN chief Guterres has also called for global controls on AI to prevent the proliferation of "**killer robots**" and deepfakes that target women.

Miscellaneous

The WHO has launched the **STI Prevalence Atlas** to track sexually transmitted infections in low- and middle-income countries. Scientists also warn of a "major crisis" as average **testosterone levels** in men have halved over the last 50 years, likely due to obesity and environmental factors. Finally, the journal *Health Systems & Reform* has launched an article collection to redefine **Health Systems Research** for a new era of reduced funding.

Some Key Reads of the Week

1. **Geneva Health Files** – [PABS Primer: The State of Play for the July Negotiations](#): A critical primer on the current state of pathogen sharing talks.

2. **V Venmetsa & P Patnaik** (Geneva Health Files) – [How a Live Debate on Information Sharing Could Affect Negotiations](#): A "must-read" analysis of how current outbreaks test PABS assumptions.
3. **Health Policy Watch** – [Africa Asserts Itself as Pandemic Agreement Talks Resume](#): Must-read report on Africa's insistence on a level playing field for access.
4. **A Rosario & P Patnaik** (Geneva Health Files) – [PABS Fault Lines Return, Positions Fierce](#): Update on entrenched positions regarding legally binding obligations.
5. **S J Lake et al** (London Review of International Law) – [Coercive containment of the Africa Group's Equity Agenda](#): Important read on how international law can hollow out equity.
6. **Africa CDC** – [In Kinshasa, President Tshisekedi Leads Ebola Response Push](#): High-level message on accelerating African support for the DRC.
7. **Cidrap News** – [Ebola deaths top 500 as DR Congo health workers threaten to strike](#): Report on the grim milestone and labor unrest.
8. **A Zumla, P Piot, et al** (NEJM) – [Ebola at 50 — Lessons for Outbreak Response](#): Perspective highlighting enduring lessons on community trust and equity.
9. **I B Gayton et al** (Stat Opinion) – [What if this Ebola outbreak can't be stopped?](#): Warning on the risk of Ebola becoming endemic in Central Africa.
10. **Melody Schreiber** (Guardian) – [Doge cuts to USAID Ebola programs](#): Investigation into how US budget cuts hindered the Ebola response.
11. **Boghuma K. Titanji** (Plos GPH) – [The Bundibugyo Ebola Virus Emergency and the erosion of global health security](#): Recommended opinion on the failure of reactive health models.
12. **UN News** – ['Shared blueprint for peace': Development goals deliver, but challenges remain](#): First read on the 2026 SDG Progress Report.
13. **Reuters** – [World must close \\$4 trillion annual funding gap to reach development goals](#): Analysis of the massive financial deficit in global development.
14. **Partnership for International Politics** – [The Promise of Accra Reset](#): Two-pager on pivotal reforms in the international health system.
15. **I D Kantiana et al** (Plos GPH) – [Global health architecture reform or restoration?](#): Critical look at the new WHO GHA taskforce.
16. **Johanna Ralston et al** (Lancet GH) – [Lived experience and global health architecture reform](#): Important read on institutionalising patient power.
17. **N Gulrajani** (ODI) – [North Stars for Northern Donors in a Post-Aid World](#): Future-facing brief for Northern donors.
18. **Devex Pro** – [Scoop: Global Fund, US agree on path around expanded gag rule](#): First read regarding the U.S. funding arrangement.
19. **A K Abubakar et al** (IJHPM) – [TICAD9 and the UHC Knowledge Hub](#): Analysis of Japan-Africa health cooperation and ownership.
20. **K Tumlinson & M Pai** (Lancet GH) – [Country ownership without fiscal justice is responsibility without resources](#): Must-read on the necessity of debt justice for health.
21. **Abasiofon Ita** (Ofon) – [Who Really Shapes Health Policy in Africa?](#): Recommended analysis on budget execution and donor exits.
22. **A Green** (Devex) – [Will the US funding deal rescue South Sudan's health system?](#): Critical report on the adequacy of bilateral aid.
23. **Nature (World View)** – [Time to give hydration breaks the red card?](#): First read on science-driven cooling breaks in sport.
24. **Guardian** – [Progress against cancer not shared by poorer countries](#): Report on persistent global cancer inequities.
25. **Health Policy Watch** – [Facing Threats to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights](#): Coverage of WHA high-level side event progress.
26. **Health Policy Watch** – [As El Niño Intensifies – WMO Warns Policymakers](#): First read on the escalating worldwide impacts of El Niño.

27. **HERA (report)** – [Counting the cost of heat: solutions for cities](#): Important analysis on the economic burden of heat on women.
28. **P Adepoju** (Semafor) – [Africa's vaccine sovereignty goal is set for its biggest hurdle](#): First read on building markets for African-made vaccines.
29. **W Parker** (Devex Opinion) – [The HIV prevention approach needs reprioritization](#): Recommended critique of biomedicalized HIV prevention.
30. **Michael R. Reich et al** (Health Systems & Reform) – [Health Systems Research for a New Era](#): First read calling for new ideas in health systems research.