

IHP 890: AI summary and key reads

Introduction

The week of 24 July 2026 was marked by significant milestones and critical transitions in global health architecture. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus commemorated the **80th anniversary of the WHO Constitution**, reaffirming the radical principle that health is a fundamental human right and essential for peace and security. Despite these ideals, the newsletter highlights a fragmented landscape: from the latest **PABS negotiations** in Geneva to the **16th BRICS health ministers' meeting** in India and an **extraordinary African Union health summit** in Accra. Amidst these high-level gatherings, a dire **Ebola outbreak** in the Democratic Republic of Congo has claimed over 1,000 lives, underscoring the gap between diplomatic discourse and ground realities.

The newsletter also addresses the controversial role of **billionaire philanthropy** following an external review of the Gates Foundation, which notably excluded Bill Gates's personal communications. As global health architecture reform continues post-2030, the editor questions whether democracies can afford not to tax extreme wealth to fund public goods. This perspective is echoed in debates on climate finance, where African nations are increasingly urged to "speak the language of finance" while facing a "poly-crisis" that determines the future of all economic and societal structures.

Featured Article: Preparing for a Peaceful Death

Solomon Salve, a medical anthropologist and theologian, provides a reflexive case study on terminal cancer care and dying at home in India. Following the rapid decline and death of his father in April 2026, Salve explores the transition from biomedical hospital settings to the intimate, spiritual care of the home. He frames the family as the "**invisible infrastructure**" that maintains continuity of care within India's fragmented health system. By blending anthropological inquiry with theological reflection on suffering and mortality, Salve examines what constitutes a "**good death**" and how personal narratives can offer profound insights into health systems research.

Highlights of the Week

PABS Negotiations (Round 7: Wrap-up)

The seventh round of negotiations for the Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) system concluded on 17 July with two competing models on the table: the "**Federated Model**" (supported by the Africa Group) and the "**Hybrid Model**" (backed by the EU). The Federated Model emphasizes sovereign national nodes and binding benefit-sharing at the point of use, whereas the Hybrid Model suggests a mix of mandatory and voluntary measures. Critics warn that a rise in **bilateral health agreements** for pathogen access may undermine multilateralism and weaken the bargaining power of low-income nations.

Ebola Emergency

The Ebola outbreak in the DRC, driven by the **Bundibugyo strain**, is spreading at a record pace and has killed over 1,000 people. Health officials are concerned by "**walking Ebola**," where mild early symptoms allow patients to move through communities while infectious. Response efforts are complicated by community resistance, health worker strikes, and funding shortages. While trials for vaccines like **Ervebo** (targeting the Zaire species) are being considered for cross-protection, experts urge the inclusion of pregnant women in research to avoid repeating past exclusions.

More on PPPR & GHS

The **2026 Africa Health Security Index** shows significant improvements in disease detection across 52 countries, yet gaps remain in biosafety and treatment delivery. Leaders like Dr. Tedros and Jean Kaseya are calling for a robust ecosystem for **diagnostics and therapeutics**, noting that current architecture is overly focused on vaccines. Additionally, the WHO's new capability framework for **National Public Health Agencies (NPHAs)** aims to shift the focus from mere institutional existence to functional accountability.

AMR

Global forecasts indicate that **antimicrobial resistance in children** is worsening, with certain bacteria projected to reach 82% resistance to last-resort antibiotics by 2035. Researchers are advocating for the use of the **AWaRe benchmarking system** to optimize antibiotic use and ensure that at least 70% of total use comes from the "Access" group to combat overuse and resistance.

Global Health Reform & Post-2030 Brainstorm

At the "Accra Reset" meeting in Dakar, **President John Mahama** called for "health sovereignty" and reclaimed independence in vaccine manufacturing. Meanwhile, Mukesh Kapila criticizes the donor trend of "**self-reliance**" as a rebranding of abandonment under fiscal duress. New proposals include a dedicated **Health Fund within the World Bank** to stabilize funding as agencies like Gavi and the Global Fund face potential "sunsetting" in their current forms.

WHO DG Race

As the selection process for the next WHO Director-General begins, candidates are being judged on their **political stewardship** and ability to rebuild trust in a fragmented landscape. The next leader must manage a decentralized architecture where authority is spread across multiple institutions rather than a single global body.

Extraordinary AU Summit on Health

The Accra summit focused on a roadmap to **ending AIDS by 2030** and addressing the continent's evolving health priorities. The session aimed to strengthen resilient health systems and secure Africa's **health sovereignty** through justice and equity.

More on Global Health Governance & Financing/Funding

The **Gates Foundation** concluded its review of ties to Jeffrey Epstein, leading to new governance changes but failing to quell broader questions about billionaire influence. Simultaneously, the **16th BRICS Health Ministers' meeting** emphasized digital health, AI, and traditional medicine. Conversely, **Unitaid** faces a severe funding crisis as major donors like France and the UK slash contributions, threatening the rollout of life-saving innovations.

UHC & PHC

New guides on **blended finance** aim to help health system architects attract private investment as aid contracts. Efforts are also underway to systematically monitor **Health Benefits Packages (HBPs)** to bridge implementation gaps in universal coverage. Experts argue that measles strategies must move beyond "elimination" targets to focus on the **social drivers of health** and primary healthcare ideals.

Global Tax Justice

Negotiations for a **UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation** offer a rare chance for equitable global tax rules. The **Zucman framework** proposes a minimum tax floor for the ultra-wealthy, reframing the debate as a defense of the tax system's integrity rather than a "punishment" of wealth.

Run-up to the AIDS Conference in Rio

New studies show that **Trump administration aid cuts** led to the closure of 1,700 HIV treatment sites, disproportionately affecting children and high-risk groups. However, the conference will also feature promising data on **lenacapavir**, a twice-yearly injection that has proven highly effective in prevention trials.

Trump 2.0 & US Global Health Strategy

The US is transitioning toward "**America First Global Health**," utilizing bilateral MOUs and sole-source "fixed amount awards". Critics worry this focus on transition mechanics and cost-shifting risks undermining active **epidemic control** in partner countries like Uganda and Tanzania.

Polio

The eradication campaign has missed targets repeatedly, leading researchers to question if a "**Plan B**" focused on global control rather than total eradication is necessary. Political barriers and funding shortfalls in **Pakistan and Afghanistan** remain the final hurdles.

UN HL Meeting on Road Safety

While global road deaths fell by 21% recently, they **rose by 17% in Africa**. A new UN declaration aims for a 50% reduction by 2030, though the **United States cast the lone vote against it**, citing concerns over "mandate creep".

Commercial & Digital Determinants of Health & NCDs

AI is emerging as a new commercial determinant, allowing industries to influence health behaviors at unprecedented scale and speed. Meanwhile, a global investigation found that **ultra-processed food firms** have brought 235 lawsuits against governments to block health regulations.

SRHR

A major review found that **menopause care is falling short** globally, with women often feeling dismissed and uninformed due to fragmented services and a lack of provider training.

Human Resources for Health

Nine African nations have launched roadmaps to transform **health professions education**, adopting competency-based curricula to meet modern health priorities.

Planetary Health (and Climate/Health)

Air pollution remains a leading killer in Africa, but the continent receives only 1% of international funding for air quality. Negotiators remain deadlocked over how to measure **climate adaptation**, while extreme heat in India acts as a "poverty multiplier," sapping the wages of the poorest workers.

Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

Brazil is preparing to suspend pharmaceutical patents as a retaliatory measure against US tariffs. Concurrently, **South African researchers** are leading local drug development initiatives to reduce reliance on high-income countries.

Migration & Health

Ethiopia's "Makatet" project aims to integrate 1.1 million refugees into the economy as taxpaying residents, offering a progressive alternative to the anti-migrant agendas of Europe and the US.

Reports & Publications

The **2026 SOFI report** reveals a mixed picture: while hunger levels are slowly easing, **2.7 billion people** still cannot afford a healthy diet. Furthermore, new economic analysis challenges the "catch-up" myth, showing that the **income gap** between core and peripheral nations has increased by up to 270% since 1960.

Miscellaneous

The WHO celebrated 25 years of **Research4Life**, which provides free scientific access to 120 countries. Ahead of World Drowning Prevention Day, a new technical package (PROTECT) was launched to address the **300,000 annual drowning deaths**.

Some Key Reads of the Week

1. **WHO Member States continue negotiations on PABS** | [Link](#) | WHO | Press release following the pivotal 7th round of negotiations.
2. **Patnaik, P.** | [Geneva Health Files](#) | **(Must-read)** Analysis of the "Game On" between the Africa Group and the EU over competing PABS models.
3. **HPW** | [Health Policy Watch](#) | **(Must-read)** A didactic guide to the two contrary proposals for pathogen sharing.
4. **Evaborhene, N. A. et al.** | [Lancet GH](#) | Commentary on the rise of bilateralism and its threat to multilateral pandemic governance.
5. **Strobeyko, A.** | [Computer Law & Security Review](#) | Explores the tension between state sovereignty and commons-oriented access for digital sequence information.
6. **Reuters** | [Reuters](#) | First look at the quarantine of Americans in Kenya following the US travel ban due to Ebola.

7. **Schwartz, L. et al.** | [Lancet](#) | **(Important)** Argues against the systemic exclusion of pregnant people from Ebola clinical trials.
8. **Gilbert, N. & Piot, P.** | [Telegraph](#) | Highlights the need to invest in local African expertise to prevent future outbreaks.
9. **Wellcome** | [Wellcome](#) | Policy brief on enabling an effective global research response to the Bundibugyo outbreak.
10. **Nature Africa** | [Nature Africa](#) | Details the 2026 Africa Health Security Index findings of improved laboratory capacity.
11. **Dr. Tedros et al.** | [Lancet Infectious Diseases](#) | **(Recommended)** Calls for a diagnostics and therapeutics architecture equivalent to that of vaccines.
12. **Namara, G. et al.** | [Plos GPH](#) | Advocates using the WHO's capability framework as a driver for institutional reform.
13. **JAMA Pediatrics** | [JAMA Pediatrics](#) | Reports a substantial global rise in antimicrobial resistance among children over two decades.
14. **Van der Sande, M. et al.** | [Lancet Public Health](#) | Commentary on benchmarking antibiotic use through the WHO AWaRe categories.
15. **Mahama, J.** | [LinkedIn](#) | A powerful call for health sovereignty and reclaiming the legacy of African vaccine production.
16. **Kapila, M.** | [Health Policy Watch](#) | **(Important)** Critiques "self-reliance" as potentially a donor branding for withdrawal.
17. **Baker, P.** | [Devex](#) | Proposes a dedicated health fund within the World Bank mimicking the IDA model.
18. **Evaborhene, N. A.** | [Global Policy](#) | Outlines the evolving criteria for the next WHO Director-General in an age of fragmentation.
19. **African Union** | [AU.int](#) | Main objectives and roadmap for the extraordinary session on ending AIDS by 2030.
20. **Gates Foundation** | [GatesFoundation.org](#) | Summary of the external review regarding past foundation engagements with Jeffrey Epstein.
21. **HPW** | [Health Policy Watch](#) | Investigates Unitaid's opaque leadership search amid plunging budgets and funding cuts.
22. **Science** | [Science](#) | Details the dramatic UK government aid cuts to African nations, some exceeding 90%.
23. **Singhal, R. & Chalkidou, K.** | [P4H](#) | A practical UHC-focused guide to designing blended finance for health system investment.
24. **Ocampo, J. A.** | [Project Syndicate](#) | Highlights the "good, bad, and ugly" in ongoing global tax negotiations at the UN.
25. **NYT** | [New York Times](#) | Reports the closure of 1,700 HIV treatment sites due to US aid cuts.
26. **Devex** | [Devex](#) | Promising findings on the twice-yearly injectable drug lenacapavir for HIV prevention.
27. **Nature** | [Nature](#) | **(Must-read)** Features a critical analysis of the need for a "Plan B" in polio eradication.
28. **WHO** | [WHO News](#) | New data showing a 21% global decline in road deaths despite increased vehicle numbers.
29. **Bavli, I. et al.** | [BMJ](#) | Proposes a framework to analyze AI as a new commercial determinant of health.
30. **Hickel, J. et al.** | [New Political Economy](#) | **(Important)** Debunks the myth of "catch-up" development with empirical GDP gap data.