

IHP News 897 (18 September 2026) (AI summary & some key reads)

Introduction & Featured Article

Editorial Overview

The 81st UN General Assembly (UNGA81) High-Level Week kicks off against a dire geopolitical and ecological backdrop. Rather than celebrating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the annual 'SDG Moment', global governance is increasingly defined by **three existential threats**: climate breakdown, nuclear risks, and artificial intelligence, alongside deepening global inequalities. Within this challenging environment, the global health community continues to advance structural reform. This issue highlights major proposals for global health architecture reform, key high-level reports (including the Gates Foundation Goalkeepers report and the Global Fund Results report), the ongoing Ebola emergency in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and tense negotiations surrounding the WHO Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system.

Featured Article

"Who gets surgery under prolonged occupation and in war? The unequal path to surgery in Palestine" (*by Duha Shellah*) This featured analysis examines how armed conflict, prolonged occupation, and fragmented governance alter healthcare access well beyond physical destruction or medical supply shortages. Focusing on Palestine, the article details how movement restrictions, checkpoints, road closures in the West Bank, and referral governance dictate who receives surgical care and when. Furthermore, the war in Gaza demonstrates the catastrophic consequences when surgical referral pathways experience systemic, rather than episodic, disruption.

Highlights

1. PABS Negotiations: A New Round (14–18 Sept, Geneva)

The eighth round of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG8) convened at WHO headquarters to negotiate the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) Annex. European Union negotiators criticized "ideological polarisation" and opposed what they termed a "transactional approach". Conversely, developing country blocs—including the African Region, Group of Equity, EMRO, and SEARO—solidified demands for legally binding standard contracts with pharmaceutical manufacturers and a "federated model" of sovereign national data nodes (citing models like Europe's Genomic Data Infrastructure). Non-state actors such as Knowledge Ecology International (KEI) advocated open access coupled with commercial contractual obligations upon product registration. Meanwhile, industry representatives (IFPMA) rejected contractual preconditions. A civil society coalition filed a formal complaint with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, arguing that developed nations' negotiating positions violate international human rights obligations.

2. Run-up to the UN High-Level Meeting on PPPR

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged member states to approve the draft political declaration on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR) ahead of the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on 25 September. The declaration targets 100-day access to countermeasures, One Health integration, International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation, and finalization of the PABS Annex. Concurrently, an OECD report demonstrated that an annual investment of ~\$6 USD PPP per capita in pandemic preparedness and early non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) yields substantial public health and economic savings across 51 member and partner economies.

3. Ebola Emergency DRC

The Ebola outbreak (Bundibugyo strain) in the DRC expanded to a seventh province (Sud-Ubangi), surpassing 7,200 confirmed cases and 3,475 deaths. Although DRC government officials reported that transmission peaked in late August, WHO and UN leaders emphasized that the epidemic remains active, noting contact-tracing coverage (88%) remains below target thresholds. The \$1.3 billion humanitarian response remains underfunded at 49%. Analysis in the newsletter addresses historical lessons unlearned, the "Ebola business" narrative fueling local mistrust, the need for survivor psychological support, and clinical frameworks for compassionate care.

4. More on PPPR

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is exploring structural pandemic preparedness reforms within its financing agreement for the DRC via the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, in collaboration with the World Bank and WHO. The lender noted that recurrent public health emergencies in the DRC threaten macroeconomic stability.

5. BRICS Summit in Delhi

At the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, leaders adopted the New Delhi Declaration, elevating health resilience alongside economic growth. Key provisions (paragraphs 50–59) commit members to universal health coverage (UHC), joint tuberculosis research, obesity prevention, primary mental health care, and digital health interoperability. BRICS leaders formally endorsed Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) and established an Expert Working Group under the BRICS Health Track. Proposals were also advanced for a dedicated New Development Bank financing window covering digital and social determinants of health.

6. Global Health Reform

A landmark *Nature Medicine* commentary co-authored by Kumanan Rasanathan and John-Arne Røttingen proposes a restructured global health system centered on country sovereignty, global public goods, and a leaner institutional landscape. Wellcome leadership warned that the reform window will close within 12 to 18 months. Ahead of UNGA, the Accra Reset High-Level Panel outlined five operational shifts to convert national sovereignty into executable purchasing power and regulatory oversight of external health financing. Additionally, a new policy brief on health financing emphasized domestic resource mobilization as the primary foundation for health system resilience.

7. More on Global Health Governance & Finance/Funding

Africa CDC Director Dr. Jean Kaseya continues pressuring African governments to increase direct funding for the institution, which currently relies on external donors for 79% of its budget. An Oxfam analysis revealed that median IMF-mandated austerity cuts quadrupled over the past decade while social spending protection floors shrank, prompting over 130 civil society organizations to warn against "frontloaded" fiscal contraction. Further contributions discuss IMF program conditionality reforms, Ireland's strategy to preserve the EU development budget during its EU Council presidency, philanthropic influence in donor countries, and comparative health compact implementation in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda.

8. The Future of Development Cooperation

A paper by Jonathan Glennie and Ben Phillips (*Naturally Together*) advocates a post-2030 paradigm shift from fragmented targets to integrated transformations aligning human rights, development, climate boundaries, and biodiversity. Monitoring data from the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) indicated that official aid recorded on partner country budgets dropped from 61% in 2018 to 41% in 2026. In the UK, Development Minister Kirsty McNeill reframed international assistance around "mutual interest and shared resilience" rather than traditional aid paradigms.

9. Trump 2.0, US Global Health Strategy & Bilateral Health Agreements

Marking the one-year anniversary of the "America First" Global Health Strategy (AFGHS), the US signed a \$98.75 million five-year bilateral MOU with Vietnam to support transition to full country ownership of HIV/TB programs and health security. Conservative think tanks questioned State Department pass-through funding to UN agencies. The US paid over \$800 million in UN regular budget and peacekeeping dues to retain its UN General Assembly voting rights, though total US arrears remain above \$4 billion. Personnel appointments include Luke Lindberg to lead the World Food Programme and Elliott Hulse to head the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

10. More on the Impact of US Aid Cuts

A global survey by Outright International revealed that 90% of LGBTQ+ rights organizations experienced funding losses following US foreign aid reductions, with nearly half losing over 50% of their budgets. Simultaneously, PEPFAR funding reductions caused widespread scale-backs of cervical cancer screening and treatment programs for women living with HIV across sub-Saharan Africa.

11. Decolonize Global Health

Critiques of "knowledge philanthropism" highlight how donor funding structures shape health data collection concepts and priorities. Following Burkina Faso's regulatory ban on displaying images of vulnerable aid recipients, analysis by Habib Benzian explores the ethics of "poverty porn" and "stunt philanthropy" in international development. Historical research details Bank of England leadership ties to slave-trade capital.

12. Social Determinants of Health

Nature welcomed the establishment of a global scientific panel on inequality. Under NCD research, a global analysis published in *PLOS One* established that women presenting with identical cardiovascular, kidney, or Parkinson's conditions as men are significantly less likely to receive active therapeutic interventions.

13. SRHR

A new *BMJ Collection* in partnership with CUNY examines strategies to protect Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) amid financial and political opposition. Key proposals include establishing a human-centred global fiscal institution operated under "one country, one vote" governance to manage debt relief and rights obligations. Additional reporting highlights the increasing clinical medicalisation of female genital mutilation (FGM) in West Africa.

14. Human Resources for Health

Analysis emphasizes that integrating Community Health Workers (CHWs) onto national public payrolls provides up to a 10:1 economic return. As external donor support shrinks, African states are urged to formalize CHW financing to sustain primary care and noncommunicable disease screening.

15. Planetary Health

Governance friction emerged over COP31 after Türkiye claimed final decision authority despite an agreement granting Australia leadership over negotiations. Transparency International exposed fossil fuel lobbyist access via EU party overflow badges. ActionAid reported that 93.5% of top climate-vulnerable nations face debt distress, spending 25 times more on debt servicing than on climate action. Additional studies cover AI datacentre e-waste projections, climate-driven Himalayan flooding in Nepal, super El Niño threats to global food systems and Dengue surges, and post-growth policy modeling in Sweden.

16. 2026 Goalkeepers Report (& More on AI & Health)

Bill Gates launched the 2026 Goalkeepers Report, announcing a \$1 billion two-year commitment to expand AI access across health, agriculture, and education in the Global South, while warning that global AI regulation remains inadequate. Reports also detail rising demand for PFAS "forever chemicals" driven by AI datacentre cooling, while UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk called for binding frontier AI governance.

17. Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

Gavi released its roadmap for novel TB vaccines (expected by 2029), projecting 7.3 million lives saved and \$135 billion in economic benefits by 2050. SADC, UNAIDS, and China agreed on regional pharmaceutical manufacturing partnerships in Southern Africa. A *Lancet* modeling study indicated that US Medicare "Most-Favored-Nation" drug pricing policies may induce pharmaceutical firms to raise prices or delay drug launches in European reference markets. Spain proposed EU bulk procurement buyer groups to incentivize biotech R&D.

18. Some More Reports

The Global Fund's 2026 Results Report documented 72 million lives saved since 2002. In 2025, supported programs expanded antiretroviral therapy coverage to 26.9 million people, treated 7.4 million people for TB, and distributed 196 million mosquito nets despite global aid headwinds.

19. Miscellaneous

A UN global risk survey revealed that major war has displaced environmental risks as the top global concern. A 34-country Rockefeller Foundation poll showed rising trust in international bodies like

WHO (69%) and the UN (62%), combined with growing public unease regarding US or Chinese global leadership. Other items address gendered care burdens, Fiji's national HIV emergency driven by methamphetamine use, the expansion of unilateral sanctions to 24.7% of the global economy, and BMJ editorial analysis on drug prohibition harming women.

Some Key Reads of the Week

#	Selection Title	First Author	Journal / Publication	URL Link	Ultra-Short Summary (Max 1 Sentence)
1	HPW – As Pandemic Talks Resume, EU Diplomat Sharply Criticises ‘Ideological Polarisation’	N/A	Health Policy Watch	Link	EU negotiator Americo Zampetti warns that ideological polarisation over pathogen access and benefit-sharing threatens consensus on the WHO Pandemic Agreement.
2	HPW – Developing Countries Unite Over Need for Binding Contracts with Pharma at Pandemic Talks	N/A	Health Policy Watch	Link	Developing country blocs at IGWG8 insist that the PABS system must incorporate legally binding standard contracts with pharmaceutical manufacturers.
3	HPW – Tedros urges approval of UN draft declaration on pandemics before the General Assembly	N/A	Health Policy Watch	<i>URL not provided in text</i>	WHO Director-General Tedros urges member states to formally approve the UN draft declaration on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.
4	OECD – The Economic Case for Pandemic Preparedness and Response: Beyond Lockdowns	OECD	OECD Report	Link	Demonstrates that investing ~\$6 USD PPP per capita annually in pandemic preparedness yields substantial public health and economic savings across 51 nations.
5	Cidrap News – DR Congo’s Ebola outbreak spreads to 7th province as cases, deaths mount	N/A	CIDRAP News	Link	Details the geographic expansion of the Ebola Bundibugyo strain outbreak in the DRC to a seventh province, with total cases exceeding 6,800.
6	HPW – DRC’s Ebola Lessons: Learned and Unlearned (Part I)	Mukesh Kapila	Health Policy Watch	Link	Analyzes whether global health responders are repeatedly failing to apply historical outbreak containment lessons in the DRC.
7	Bloomberg – Congo’s Ebola Crisis Spurs IMF to Consider Pandemic Financing Reforms	N/A	Bloomberg	<i>URL not provided in text</i>	Reports that the IMF is considering embedding pandemic preparedness reforms into its financing program for the DRC to safeguard macroeconomic stability.
8	Economic Times – Leaders of BRICS countries call for stronger cooperation in health, endorse initiatives on TB	N/A	Economic Times	Link	Highlights the 18th BRICS Summit New Delhi Declaration commitment to universal health coverage and joint tuberculosis research initiatives.

9	First Post – Brics is rewriting the Global South’s health playbook	V Bhanu	First Post	<i>URL not provided in text</i>	Examines how the New Delhi Declaration establishes a broader Global South health architecture integrating primary care, digital health, and local manufacturing.
10	Nature Medicine – Rethinking the global health system for a new international order	Kumanan Rasanathan	Nature Medicine	Link	Outlines a vision for a global health system that positions sovereign nations as primary agents supported by leaner global institutions.
11	The Lancet – The Accra Reset must turn sovereignty into country power	E Okereke et al.	The Lancet	Link	Proposes five practical shifts to transform country leadership principles into enforceable governance over external health funding.
12	NYT – The Doctor Pressuring African Leaders to Own the Ebola Response	N/A	New York Times	Link	Profiles Africa CDC Director Dr. Jean Kaseya's drive to transition African outbreak response away from donor dependency toward domestic ownership.
13	Oxfam – IMF-required austerity cuts quadrupled over past decade, and new Fund policy is poised to push for even deeper and harsher cuts	N/A	Oxfam	Link	Reveals that median IMF-mandated austerity cuts quadrupled over the past decade while social spending floors shrank significantly.
14	Substack – Naturally together	Jonathan Glennie	Global Cooperation Institute	<i>URL listed as "Substack"</i>	Argues for a post-2030 international paradigm shift focused on integrated transformations across human rights, development, climate, and biodiversity.
15	GPEDC – Making Development Co-operation More Effective Progress Report 2026	GPEDC / OECD / UNDP	GPEDC	Link	Documents that official aid recorded on partner country budgets dropped sharply from 61% in 2018 to 41% in 2026.
16	Think Global Health – Tracking the "America First" Bilateral Health Agreements	N/A	Think Global Health	Link	Analyzes gaps between country health needs and new cofinancing commitments under the US "America First" Global Health Strategy.
17	Devex – 90% of LGBTQ+ groups have lost funding since 2025, new report finds	N/A	Devex	Link	Finds that 90% of LGBTQ+ rights organizations worldwide experienced severe funding losses following the US foreign aid overhaul.
18	Devex – How cervical cancer screening became a PEPFAR casualty	N/A	Devex	Link	Details how a 25% funding cut to PEPFAR disrupted cervical cancer screening and treatment for women living with HIV across low-income nations.
19	Science Politics – Who Pays and Who Counts in Global Health?	Jil Molenaar	Science Politics	Link	Critiques donor-driven "knowledge philanthropism" and advocates centering frontline

					health workers in health data collection.
20	Substack – The Pose of Poverty	Habib Benzian	Substack	<i>URL listed as "On Substack"</i>	Examines Burkina Faso's ban on "poverty porn" and the ethical implications of using images of deprivation in donor fundraising.
21	Nature (Editorial) – Global inequality panel is a chance for research to change lives	N/A	Nature	Link	Welcomes the establishment of a global scientific panel on inequality and calls for broad international research participation.
22	BMJ Collection – Confronting financial and political headwinds against sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice	Chelsea Clinton	BMJ Collection	Link	Calls on health leaders to build sustainable governance and financing systems for sexual and reproductive health and rights.
23	BMJ Collection – International fiscal architecture for advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights	Attiya Waris et al.	BMJ Collection	Link	Proposes a human-centred global fiscal body operating on a "one country, one vote" basis to prioritize human rights and debt relief.
24	Devex Pro – Why community health workers could be a smart investment as aid shrinks	N/A	Devex Pro	Link	Explains why placing Community Health Workers on national public payrolls provides high economic returns as external aid declines.
25	Climate Change News – Türkiye says it has "final decision" at COP31 despite Australia running negotiations	N/A	Climate Change News	Link	Details governance friction over COP31 after Türkiye claimed final decision authority despite Australia leading negotiations.
26	ActionAid – Debt Fuels the Climate Crisis: How the Finance Flows	N/A	ActionAid	Link	Reveals that 93.5% of top climate-vulnerable countries face debt distress and spend 25 times more on debt servicing than climate action.
27	Reuters – Governments worldwide are way behind AI says Bill Gates	N/A	Reuters	Link	Features Bill Gates warning that no government is prepared for AI's societal impacts, alongside a \$1 billion Gates Foundation AI pledge.
28	GAVI – New "blockbuster" tuberculosis vaccines could save seven million lives by 2050	N/A	Gavi	Link	Outlines Gavi's roadmap for novel TB vaccines expected by 2029, which could save 7.3 million lives by 2050.
29	Euractiv / The Lancet – US drug pricing could push EU prices higher, study finds	Thomas Hwang et al.	Euractiv / The Lancet	Link	Models how US Most-Favored-Nation Medicare drug pricing policies may incentivize manufacturers to raise prices in Europe.
30	HPW – Despite Funding Cuts, Global Fund Sustains Progress Against HIV, TB and Malaria	N/A	Health Policy Watch	Link	Reports that Global Fund-supported programs expanded HIV, TB, and malaria coverage in 2025 despite donor funding reductions.

