



Towards Digital Transformation for Universal Health Coverage

Context



The impact of **digital health innovation** was previously a **low priority** for governments and health sector leaders in many countries but this has changed.



The **global digital health market is now estimated to be over US\$210 billion in 2022**. It is projected to reach between US\$780 billion and US\$1.5 trillion by 2030.



Barriers to digital innovation at scale in health systems have diminished substantially. As experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic showed, **the potential for digital health transformation is increasing rapidly**, particularly in emerging economies.



While digital technologies cannot solve systems-level issues, they are likely over time to **transform many aspects of how health systems are organised and structured in terms of provision and access to services**.



Context



The expansion of technology and the entry of new actors into the health sector has led to **concerns about changes in power relations** that may increase inequities, including in health outcomes.



The **WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025** recommends that digital technologies be viewed as “an essential component and an enabler of sustainable health systems and universal health coverage”.



The WHO Strategy calls on **countries to formulate and implement digital health strategies and establish mechanisms** to involve all relevant stakeholders in decision-making.



Many **countries lack regulatory innovations** to keep pace with rapid digital health transformation and effective governance arrangements in ensure the provision of health services within their mixed health systems are accessible to all population groups.



Multistakeholder consultation

Between 2018 and 2022, we **met with over 300 senior government officials, leaders of private companies, technology innovators and health system analysts** working in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The consultations explored issues and actions identified by participants as critical to the management of digital transformation in health systems.



Face-to-face meetings:
Argentina, Colombia, India, Rwanda, Vietnam



Online meetings



Multistakeholder consultation

A diverse range of actors participated in the consultative process.



Private sector

CEOs and senior management of companies and industry bodies covering service delivery, access, supply chain, medical devices, and medicines.



Government

Government elected representatives, national and state-level officials.



Multilateral bodies

UN agencies, development banks, and international parliamentary assemblies.



Funders

Bi- and multi-lateral funders, and private equity funds.



Research and technical organisations

Academic institutions, think tanks, international non-governmental organisations, and consultancies.



Insights



Guide the actions of countries and digital providers to situate digital health strategies in the context of governing a mixed health system.



Inform governments' engagement with large and rapidly changing information technology sectors.



Active convening of public and private sector actors and community groups to guide the integration digital health interventions in support of health system goals.



Work with a range of technology actors to ensure that **digital innovations contribute to national strategies** for improving health and equitable access to health.



Insights



Foster ongoing mutual learning through new groupings and for a with a stake in digital transformations, including the public and NGOs.



Building capacities through, specialist groups and agencies with training and resources to perform technically sophisticated assessments that can feed into health system decision-making.



Support national initiatives to build the capacity for the governance of a rapidly changing health sector.



An iterative approach

Build common understanding and trust

between multiple stakeholders through mutual learning and consensus building.

Take a learning-by-doing approach

by identifying potential problems and testing strategies to address them.

Interventions are needed at national, regional and global levels.

Support mechanisms for local learning and mutual learning between countries.



An inclusive approach



Meaningfully involve citizens in processes to maintain trust in contexts of rapid change.

Create space for the needs and perspectives of **vulnerable and marginalised groups.**

Establish and reinforce a value framework that centres on the pursuit of **equitable health outcomes for all.**

Promote independent analysis in collaboration with those seeking the means to strengthen legal and governance frameworks.



Digital initiatives: challenges and potential risks

Interventions with **little capacity for impact at scale** and focusing on a narrow aspect of digital health

Fragmentation of services due to **lack of interoperability and poor coordination** with public health services

Increased inequality in access due to **digital exclusion and/or the price of care**

Poorly performing partnerships between digital companies and the public sector



Digital initiatives: challenges and potential risks



Agenda for research and learning

1

How can governments **influence the direction of innovation** and what are the relative roles of local and international companies?

2

How can contracts between government health services and technology companies ensure both **accountability and a capacity for innovation and change**?

3

How is digital transformation influencing **equitable access to services** by different social and economic groups and the kinds of service provided?



Agenda for research and learning

4

To what extent are different stakeholders **influencing the use of AI?**

5

How are digital innovations **enabling people to manage their own health** and how have they reduced the availability of in-person support?

6

What is the structure of the global digital health industry and how does this **influence the direction of innovation and governance arrangements?**



Transformation Labs



Spaces where health and non-health stakeholders will convene to **understand, shape and co-create activities** that support digital transformation aligned with national health priorities.



To capture what kind, when, where, how and at what level digital **transformations can interface with health systems.**



Support interrogation and experimentation to **challenge** established institutional models; **recognise** the need for innovation in governance; and foster unconventional **partnerships** that may eventually become the norm.



Generate evidence and stimulate **new thought processes on innovative ways** to incorporate new technologies into strategies for improving health service performance.



Transformation Labs

T-Labs should focus on the process of digital change with the following considerations:



Build agreement
on the aims of
digital
transformation
(provision of
equitable access to
health services),

**Build mutual
understanding**
of a context
drawing on the
points of view of
different
stakeholders.

Identify
priority actions
for change.

**Propose
and develop**
new models of
engagement.



Transformation Labs

T-Labs should focus on the process of digital change with the following considerations:

Define roles and responsibilities

of each stakeholder in the implementation of actions.

Establish mechanisms

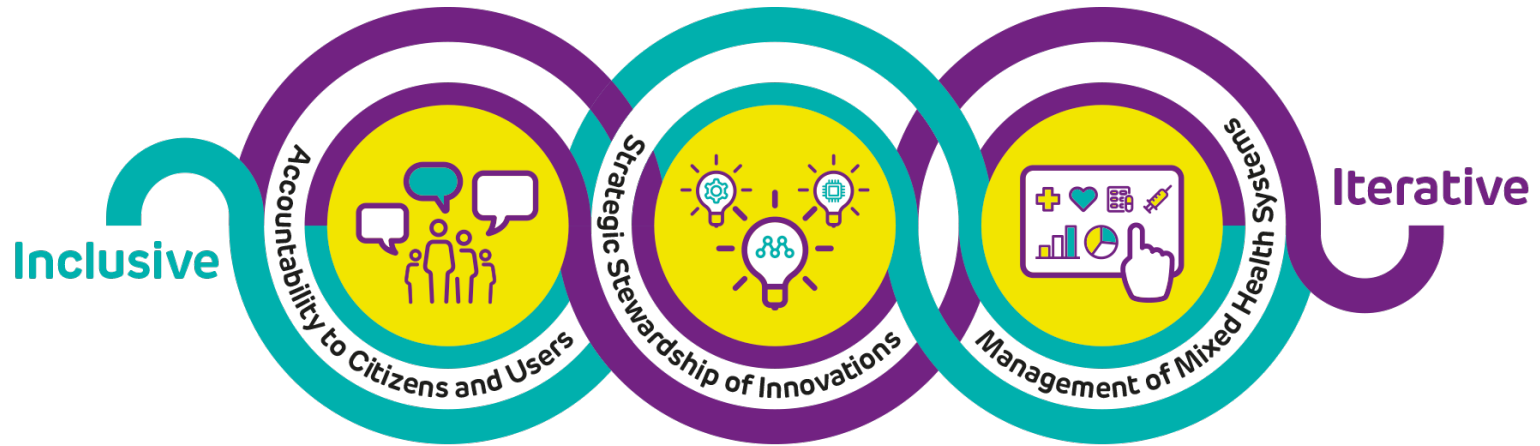
for adjusting implementation based on experience, evidence and circumstances.

Ensure

that the learning generated will help to build the capacity of stakeholders to engage effectively in digital health transformation.



Transformation Labs: Equity-Led Approach to Digital Health Transformation





Thank you!

For more information please contact:

Dr Priya Balasubramaniam

Public Health Foundation of India

priya@sustainablehealthinnovations.com

Dr Gerry Bloom

Institute of Development Studies, UK

g.bloom@ids.ac.uk