



Executive Summary

The Case for Digital Health: Accelerating Progress to Achieve UHC

In 2019, world leaders committed to extend universal health coverage (UHC) to everyone by 2030. Whilst most countries have expanded access to essential health services, the goal of UHC remains elusive for around half of the world's population, particularly those living in low and middle income countries.

Innovative approaches are urgently needed to put all countries on track to achieve UHC. Almost every person on the planet is now covered by a mobile broadband network meaning that they could potentially benefit from digitally enabled health systems and the adoption of digital health services and tools.

Digitalisation and the use of digital technologies is already an important and growing part of most health systems. However, national governments and international health partners are not yet fully unlocking the potential of digital health to scale up access to primary health care services as a pathway to achieve UHC.

In this digital age, health care and digital transformations are becoming inseparable. As we countdown to the year 2030, it is critical that the benefits of digital technologies and data are made available to everyone and that the risks of digital transformations for health are mitigated through strong and inclusive governance.

Unlocking the digital dimensions of UHC

The effective and equitable use of digital technologies

and data can enhance each of the three dimensions of UHC—service coverage, population coverage, and financial coverage—as well as strengthen health governance. Through harnessing these digital dimensions of UHC, countries can build strong and resilient health systems and support individuals to better manage their own health.

Regardless of their level of digital maturity or economic development, countries across the globe are already demonstrating how including digital health as part of their UHC approach can lead to expanded coverage of health services and improved health outcomes.

However, several barriers at local, national and global levels are standing in the way of countries adopting or scaling up digital health solutions in ways that contribute to UHC. Without addressing these barriers, and overcoming ethical and human rights concerns in relation to digital technologies and data, the application of digital health risks exacerbating health inequities and undermining the pursuit of health for all.

Actions to accelerate progress towards UHC

Unleashing the potential of digital health for everyone will require coordinated, multi-sectoral action to close the digital divide and implement UHC-driven approaches to digital health. Transform Health is calling on political leaders, technology companies, international donors and other digital health partners to accelerate progress towards UHC in the digital age by taking the following actions:

Recommendations for Action

1

Put communities at the centre of digital health

2

Design and implement digital health strategies that will deliver UHC

3

Support health workforces to enable digital transformations

4

Ensure strong regulation and legislation to create an enabling environment for digital transformation while protecting the rights and privacy of citizens

5

Increase domestic and international investments to strengthen digitally enabled primary health care systems and empower communities

6

Create a global governance framework for health data to maximise the public benefits of data whilst safeguarding individual privacy, ownership and security

In this digital age, it is unacceptable that half the world's population are being deprived of essential health care. Digitalisation and the appropriate application of digital technologies should be a central part of countries' approaches as they redouble their efforts to achieve UHC by 2030.

Our health will continue to be transformed by digital innovations and new technologies. It is imperative that they are designed, used and governed in ways that will allow everyone to enjoy the benefits of digitally enabled care and realise their right to health.

