



PRIORITISING DIGITAL HEALTH: AN IMPORTANT ACCELERATOR OF UHC PROGRESS

TRANSFORM HEALTH'S ASKS FOR THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY, UHC HIGH LEVEL MEETING AND G20

Digital health and health data governance are important accelerators and components for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to be achieved by 2030. Their vital role must be prioritised as part of UHC discussions and 2023 offers an important opportunity to ensure this happens with the 76th World Health Assembly in May, the High-level meeting on UHC in September, and the G20, which has already identified digital health as a driver of UHC. This policy brief outlines eight key recommendations to ensure this happens as part of this critical year of action.



Digital health is already an important and growing part of most health systems. As such, we cannot talk about achieving Universal Health Coverage, without considering the vital role of digital health. The equitable, inclusive and sustainable digital transformation of health systems offers a huge opportunity to scale up access to primary health care services, strengthen resilient health systems, close equity gaps, and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal of reaching UHC by 2030.

Governments endorsed the [global strategy on digital health 2020–2025](#), at the World Health Assembly in 2020 - a global commitment to prioritise digital health in achieving UHC and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. To deliver on this commitment and wider UHC goals, governments and other stakeholders must prioritise digital health investment and stronger health data governance.

An investment in digital health is an investment in UHC

Increased and better coordinated investment to support the digital transformation of health systems must be part of wider health system investment to deliver UHC. As an important catalytic investment, even modest additional investments, if well directed, have the potential to build stronger and more resilient health

systems that leave no one behind. This investment must go beyond the introduction of individual technologies and instead focus on the needed investments and actions to drive a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable transformation of health systems that delivers health for all. Transform Health's report, [Closing the Digital Divide: More and better funding for the digital transformation of health](#), sets out an approach to guide investments and action towards health for all in the digital age.

Strengthening health data governance for improved health and well-being

The increased digitalisation of health systems has increased the amount of health data that is collected and used. Data is a vital tool for improved health and well-being, however, there is a need to strengthen the governance of that data to ensure it is used for public good and prioritises equity, whilst protecting individual rights. A [global health data governance framework](#) would establish

an agreement between countries around a set of minimum regulatory standards for the governance of health data, which would inform and strengthen national legislation and also govern health data sharing across countries. This would lead to stronger and more equitable health systems, improved health emergency and pandemic response, improved research and innovation and would advance UHC goals. Importantly, this would improve public trust in health data systems, which is critical to foster data use for public good. [More than 150 organisations](#) have already recognised the need for action on this pressing issue.

Key asks for the World Health Assembly, High-level meeting on UHC and G20

During the World Health Assembly, High-level meeting on UHC and G20 in 2023, we urge governments and all stakeholders to prioritise digital health and health data governance, as key accelerators and components of UHC progress. In order to achieve UHC by 2030, it is vital to:

- 1** **Prioritise digital health transformation as a cross-functional enabler and accelerator to achieving UHC by 2030**, rather than a siloed vertical health issue.
- 2** **Champion health data governance and call for the development of a global framework** to establish a set of common regulatory standards (for subsequent endorsement by governments at the World Health Assembly in May 2024), to strengthen national legislation and regulation and govern health data sharing across countries.
- 3** **Ensure a global health data governance framework is developed through a transparent and inclusive multistakeholder process** (with the meaningful engagement of civil society) and **underpinned by [Equity and rights-based Health Data Governance Principles](#)**. We call on governments to endorse the Principles, which provide a foundation for the development of a global framework and should inform national legislation, regulation and policies.
- 4** **Increase and better target funding for digital health**, to support the equitable, inclusive, sustainable digital transformation of health systems, as part of wider health system investment to deliver UHC. Ensure funding is coordinated and aligned with national priorities.
- 5** **Develop national costed digital health strategies** as an integral component of UHC and health system strengthening agendas. Strategies should be developed, implemented and monitored in an inclusive and participatory manner, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.
- 6** **Establish a strong national regulatory and policy environment** to guide the digital transformation of the health system so that it is inclusive, equitable and sustainable. This is important to establish what kind of digitalised health system a country needs to achieve UHC.
- 7** **Strengthen mechanisms for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement** at all levels of planning, strategy, execution and monitoring to ensure the digital transformation is effective in improving health outcomes and accelerating UHC progress. This must include the meaningful engagement of civil society, youth, women and marginalised and hard-to-reach communities.
- 8** **Close the divide in digital access**, prioritising strategic, targeted and coordinated actions to ensure this happens. This is a prerequisite for equitable access to technology-enabled health services. This means confronting coverage gaps, affordability and digital literacy.