Transform Health YOUTH

Youth Call to Action

for Inclusive, Equitable and Rights-Based Digital Health

Our Moment, Our Mandate

Why a call to action from young people?

Social, economic, infrastructural and other digital determinants of health continue to influence individuals' ability to access, use, and benefit from digital technologies to improve their health and well-being. Across the world, some young people are living the digital health reality: accessing telemedicine, navigating Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) platforms, using AI-enabled tools, training as health workers, and leading start-ups that build the technologies shaping tomorrow. Other groups of young people on the other hand are still struggling with the foundational elements of a digital health future - equitable access to connectivity and digital infrastructure.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025 has been extended until 2027, and the development of the new Strategy for 2028-2033 is underway. The United Nations will convene a high-level meeting on universal health coverage (UHC) in 2027 to review the progress towards commitments made in the 2023 political declaration, focusing on achieving SDG target 3.8 by 2030. However, there is a risk that youth voices in their diversities could be excluded from these processes, as they were not actively engaged previously. The next Global Digital Health Strategy and UHC high-level meeting must embed youth participation from the start, to break cycles of exclusion and ensure the credibility and inclusiveness of global health transformation efforts.

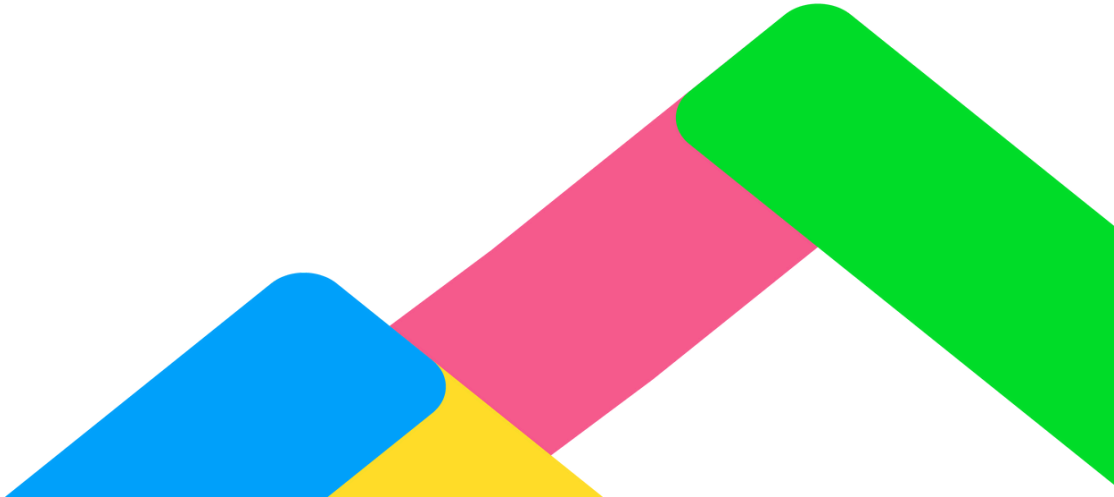
This call to action draws from a six-month consultation process that directly engaged over 300 young people from multiple regions and countries to document the barriers, opportunities, and priorities in digital health from a youth perspective. The insights gathered have been synthesised into this Youth Call to Action for Inclusive, Equitable and Rights-Based Digital Health.

This is a call for digital systems that protect, empower and foster trust for all, including young people, especially those living in low-connectivity and low-resource settings. There is a demand for digital health systems that are safe, inclusive, accessible, human-centred, context-specific and designed for UHC. We aim for the inclusion of the perspectives and recommendations in this call to action, in the development of the new Global Digital Health Strategy and the Political Declaration of the 2027 UHC high-level meeting. We also seek to ensure that the priorities articulated in the Youth Call to Action are meaningfully integrated into the development, implementation, and review of national digital health policies, strategies, and framework, to strengthen alignment between national strategies and the lived realities of young people.

- 6-month consultation process
- 300 young people engaged
- Barriers, opportunities and priorities of youth captured

Young people across the world engage with the digital health ecosystem in diverse and dynamic ways. Many interact with it as end-users, seeking information, care, and connection through digital platforms. Some are innovators and entrepreneurs, designing the next generation of health technologies, data tools, and AI-driven solutions. Others are healthcare professionals and digital health champions, working at the frontline of service delivery and system transformation. Our findings suggest that each of these groups has different needs.

Youth category	Digital health needs
End-users	As end-users of digital tools, young people need affordable, safe, private, and easy to use digital health services. These services must work offline, be available in local languages, protect health data, and connect users to offline healthcare and support services.
Innovators and entrepreneurs	Youth innovators need an enabling environment with fair and accessible funding, mentorship opportunities, and strong digital and regulatory infrastructure. Clear data governance and ethical standards are essential to help them build, test, and scale responsible innovations.
Health professionals	Health professionals need practical digital training and access to appropriate tools that allow them to apply and strengthen digital competencies within health systems.
Digital health champions	Digital health champions are seeking access to information, policy and advocacy skills, youth coalitions/movements and formal seats at decision-making tables, with real influence, not symbolic participation.



Young people's priorities and concerns about the future of digital health

Despite their different contexts, a clear pattern emerged: young people care about digital health because they believe it directly shapes how they access, experience, and influence health systems in a rapidly changing world. They believe that digital health offers a pathway to bridge the healthcare access gap, enabling more inclusive, youth-friendly, and responsive services. Across diverse backgrounds, regions, and experiences, young people shared common priorities and concerns about the future of digital health. Their perspectives reflected lived realities, from clinics to classrooms, from online platforms to innovation labs, and revealed what truly matters to them. These themes include Data rights and privacy; Sustainable and equitable financing; Leadership and coordination of digital health; Equitable access to digital health; Digital literacy; and Meaningful youth engagement.

1. Data rights and privacy

Young people continue to express deep concerns about the lack of clear guarantees for the safety of their health data when engaging with digital health systems. Many fear that their personal information, particularly related to sexual and reproductive health, diseases, and mental health remains vulnerable to misuse or exposure. This fear of data breaches discourages some youth from seeking care or using digital platforms. It stems from the absence of comprehensive data governance frameworks and laws that ensure privacy and security, transparent licensing and accreditation, algorithmic accountability, and strong equity and accessibility safeguards. At the same time, young innovators face challenges due to the lack of clear, ethical, and harmonised data governance standards, which limits their ability to build responsible, trustworthy, and scalable digital health solutions. The current weak data protection systems mean vulnerable young people could face discrimination, stigma, or harm if their personal health information is accessed without authorisation, especially in sensitive areas such as SRHR, mental health, disability, and migrant health. Without ethical and harmonised health data governance, youth-led digital innovations will struggle to scale, leading to wasted talent, fragmented pilot projects, and lost opportunities for system-wide impact.

> *Without national or regional legislation to protect privacy, young people remain vulnerable. We need frameworks that ensure confidentiality, prevent stigma and discrimination, and guide how our health data is used to encourage uptake of digital platforms for SRHR.*
>
> *- Youth Consultation, Africa region*

2. Sustainable and equitable financing

Young people believe that digital health investments are donor-driven, and overly focused on short-term pilot projects that fade once external funding ends, creating dependency rather than building resilient and sustainable systems. They are concerned that national budgets are still not aligned with long-term digital health needs or local priorities, while lack of investment in affordable connectivity

continues to hinder equitable access. There is limited access to funding for innovations, which also affect youth-led innovation, with support too often restricted to hackathons instead of meaningful investment pathways, incubation programmes, and commercialisation support that can turn ideas into lasting impact.

> *Digital health funding must advance Universal Health Coverage and promote equity, sustainability, and local ownership. Investments should align with national strategies, avoid duplication, and strengthen health systems, not create new silos.*
>
> *- Youth leader in Kenya*

3. Leadership and coordination of digital health

Without strong government leadership, digital health initiatives are often fragmented, short-term, and donor-driven rather than nationally owned. In the absence of clear coordination and alignment with national digital health strategies, projects risk duplication, poor sustainability, and limited impact on health systems strengthening and UHC.

> *Without strong national leadership and coordination, digital health will remain fragmented. We need clear national strategies, solid governance, and strong laws and standards to build trust and real accountability.*
>
> *- Global Youth Consultation*

4. Equitable access to digital health

Young people expressed concern that digital health tools and systems still exclude large segments of the population, particularly those in rural areas, low-income households, and marginalised communities. They highlighted that high data costs, limited connectivity, language barriers, inadequate accessibility features, and reliance on high-end devices mean that only privileged youth can fully benefit from these innovations. They stressed that when digital health platforms are not intentionally designed to serve everyone, they risk reinforcing inequality and undermining progress toward UHC. Without urgent reforms, digital health systems risk widening existing inequities, leaving behind young people and marginalised populations who already face barriers to access.

> *Equity in digital health is not just about reaching marginalised youth, it's also about engaging those who may not yet realise its importance. True inclusion means elevating new voices, especially persons with disabilities and rural youth, so that no one is excluded from shaping the future.*
>
> *- Youth leader, Mexico*

5. Digital literacy

Young people believe that digital health can only succeed if people understand how to use digital health tools. Yet digital literacy remains low among many youth, communities, and even among health professionals. They note that there are too few accessible, youth-friendly programmes that build practical digital and data skills, such as verifying information, navigating platforms safely, and understanding digital rights. From their experience, training for young health workers is often informal, inconsistent, and disconnected from national accreditation systems, leaving them underprepared to engage in the digital transformation of health.

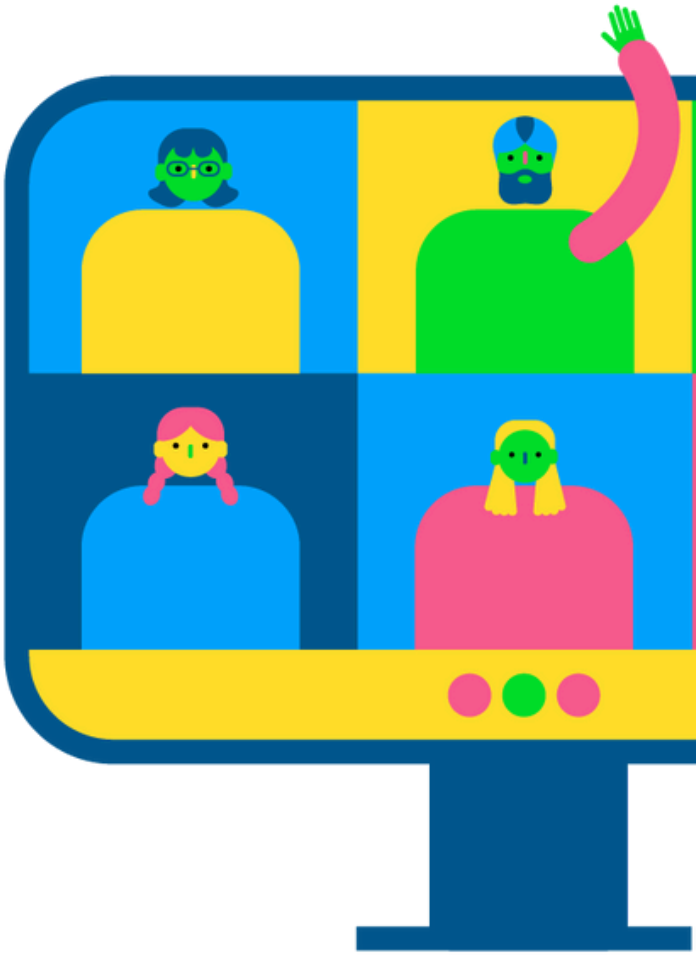
> *Many health workers and patients still don't have the skills to use health apps, digital records, or telemedicine. Even when the technology exists, this gap in knowledge keeps people from fully benefiting from digital health.*
>
> *- Student Leader, Global Consultation*

6. Meaningful youth engagement

Across many countries, young people shared that digital health decision-making spaces remain inaccessible to the majority of youth, particularly those outside major cities or formal advocacy networks. While some youth are invited to speak at events, they highlight that their perspectives are rarely captured in policy documents, workplans or budget priorities. As a result, the concerns of young people, particularly marginalised and hard to reach youth populations, remain unaddressed. Ensuring that young people are meaningfully engaged from the outset is essential.

This includes involving young people in the development and design of policies to ensure they reflect and respond to their concerns.

> *Too often, young people are left out of digital health policies that directly shape our future. We don't just want to be consulted—we want to co-design. From writing Terms of Reference to designing programmes and setting agendas, youth must be at the table from day one.*
>
> *- Youth leader, Senegal*



Youth Calls to Action

For Multilateral Bodies (including WHO and regional bodies)

- Ensure the **next Global Digital Health Strategy prioritises digital infrastructure, equitable and sustainable financing, digital literacy, and data governance** as foundational pillars to ensure that digital transformation truly serves people. Through the strategy, governments, development partners, and multilateral institutions must be encouraged to:
  - **Invest in inclusive infrastructure** to guarantee affordable, reliable internet access and digital tools for all communities, including rural and marginalised youth.
  - **Establish sustainable and equitable funding** mechanisms that move beyond short-term donor projects to strengthen national systems. Funding must also support youth-led innovation.
  - **Integrate digital literacy** into education and workforce training, empowering young people to use, design, and lead digital health solutions.
  - **Adopt and enforce strong data governance and protection** frameworks to build trust, safeguard personal information, and ensure ethical use of health data.
- **Support** countries to create **costed national digital health strategies** based on local priorities and needs.
- **Establish global ethical standards for health data governance** for stakeholder drawing on the Model Law.

For Governments

- **Invest in digital infrastructure** to close the digital divide and enable equitable access to digital health services.
- **Develop and enforce rights-based health data governance** frameworks that protect privacy, ensure transparency, and promote ethical data use.
- **Integrate digital literacy and data rights education** into national curricula and community programmes to build an informed and empowered population.
- **Strengthen regulation of digital health tools, AI, and telemedicine** to guarantee quality, safety, equity, and accountability in healthcare delivery.
- **Prioritise digital health in national and local health financing** mechanisms, ensuring funding is guided by sustainable, equity-focused, and context-responsive strategies.
- **Increase youth inclusion** in governance processes.

Youth Calls to Action

For Funders

- **Finance public-interest digital infrastructure**, including open data systems, interoperable platforms, and ethical AI, to strengthen local ownership and resilience.
- **Invest in long-term capacity-building programmes** to enhance digital literacy, innovation, and leadership skills among young people, including young health workers.
- **Fund civil society advocacy** to protect digital rights, strengthen data privacy and transparency, and hold governments accountable for equitable digital health initiatives.
- **Establish youth-led digital health innovation and research funds** to empower young innovators to design, test, and scale solutions that respond to community needs.
- **Promote and facilitate youth participation** in digital health project, ensuring youth are engaged not just as beneficiaries but as co-creators, implementers, and evaluators.

For Private Sector and Tech Innovators

- **Co-design digital health products with youth** to ensure accessibility, cultural relevance, and inclusivity, and to ensure they respond to their needs
- **Implement ethical AI and privacy-first design principles** that protect users' data and promote transparency in algorithmic decision-making.
- **Commit to developing low-data, offline-friendly platforms** to reach underserved populations in low-connectivity and resource-limited settings.
- **Establish internship pipelines and mentorship programmes** to nurture the next generation of youth innovators and digital health leaders.

For Civil Society and Academia

- **Build youth capacity** in digital health policy, data rights, ethics, and governance to strengthen informed participation.
- **Simplify and democratise digital health knowledge** by breaking down technical language and making policies accessible to young people and communities.
- **Support youth-led advocacy and accountability initiatives** so that young people can monitor implementation and influence decision-making.
- **Mentor and incubate youth-led grassroots innovations**, ensuring that young innovators have the resources, networks, and support to scale their solutions sustainably

Acknowledgements

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Transform Health is a global coalition of 215 organisations driving the digital transformation of health to achieve universal health coverage. Our focus is on strengthening the enabling environment - the laws, regulation, policies, coordination structures and resources - that ensure the digital health transformation is equitable, inclusive and sustainable and that digital technologies are adopted responsibly, equitably, and at scale. The coalition is committed to promoting youth and women's participation and leadership in the digital transformation of health systems and to ensure their concerns and needs, as well as those of marginalised groups are addressed.

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