

Global Digital Health Index launches alongside World Health Assembly

Index to track, monitor, and evaluate the use of digital technology for health across countries

May 22, 2018 - Geneva, Switzerland – A global group of leaders at the World Health Assembly today launched the [Global Digital Health Index \(GDHI\)](#), an interactive digital resource that tracks, monitors, and evaluates the use of digital technology for health across countries. The GDHI will empower health ministries, funders, policy makers, and industry players to make informed strategic decisions as they build sustainable digital health solutions at scale.

“To achieve universal health coverage over the next decade, coherent use of digital health will be key. The Index will be a valuable tool at national level to know where to focus efforts, and to allow comparison with other countries that have faced similar challenges,” said Dr. Peter Benjamin, Co-Founder at [HealthEnabled](#), a digital health nonprofit that co-facilitates the GDHI with the [Global Development Incubator \(GDI\)](#), an organization that builds social impact startups and partnerships.

Technologies such as mobile phones, tablets, remote patient monitoring devices, and sensors have the potential to save lives, extend the reach of healthcare services, and reduce healthcare costs – yet many countries face persistent challenges in integrating these technologies into their health systems at scale. By benchmarking countries against standardized digital health criteria, the GDHI will allow them to track progress and identify weaknesses within their digital health initiatives so they can mature their digital health policy and practice over time. The GDHI will motivate improvements in national digital health systems and more targeted investments globally, ultimately using digital health to accelerate and monitor the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3, “Ensure healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all ages.”

“Digital technologies have reached a level of maturity where, if properly deployed, they can transform healthcare and build sustainable digital health systems as a common good for all,” said Dr. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake, President of the Commonwealth Medical Association and Chairman of the Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health. “As the Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health collaborates closely with countries to help them strengthen their health systems through the deployment of digital technologies, the Global Digital Health Index will be an invaluable tool to help us identify countries' needs and provide support to address them.”

The GDHI steering committee includes a broad range of government, private sector, academic, NGO, and other top institutions and individuals in digital health. The group includes representatives from the Ministries of Health of India, Mali, and Thailand, as well as from Royal Philips, Commonwealth Medical Association, PATH, Asia e-Health Network, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, World Health Organization, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), Johnson & Johnson, the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Joanne Peter, Health Tech Lead for Global Community Impact at Johnson & Johnson, noted, “Johnson & Johnson is proud to be an early supporter of the Global Digital Health Index, a tool to help countries around the world move towards mature digital health systems that are more efficient, more responsive to data and trends, and more patient-centered. We believe that digital technologies are an essential enabler as we work collectively to change the trajectory of health for humanity.”

The GDHI’s development began in 2016, when HealthEnabled and GDI partnered with Dalberg’s Design Impact Group (DIG), ThoughtWorks, and representatives from 20+ countries and 50+ international agencies to ideate on a tool that could help countries benchmark and monitor their investments in digital health over time. Using the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) eHealth Strategy Toolkit, the GDHI took shape. Since its beginning, the GDHI has received financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Johnson & Johnson, Royal Philips, and HIMSS.

“By measuring the impact of digital tools and technologies, we can help increase levels of understanding, collaboration and adoption of value based care strategies,” said Jan Kimpen, Chief Medical Officer at Royal Philips. “This means working towards better healthcare experience and outcomes, achieved at lower cost. Royal Philips launched its Future Health Index three years ago to help benchmark and evaluate the impact of connected care, and we welcome the launch of the Global Digital Health Index as a complementary platform to support more patient centric and sustainable global healthcare.”

The GDHI version one that launched today includes data from 10 countries including Bangladesh, Benin, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Dr. Ousmane Ly, CEO of the National Agency for Telehealth and Medical Informatics of Mali, commented: “The Index is a fantastic opportunity for countries to assess the progress made and understand what steps they must take to ensure digital health provides all citizens with quality care. Mali will use the Index as a permanent monitoring tool for its national digital health program.”

Dr. Robyn Whittaker, Associate Professor University of Auckland & Clinical Director Innovation Waitemata District Health Board, participated in the initial workshop to design the Index. She commented, “The Index comes at a great time for New Zealand, as the Ministry of Health has been working on our digital health strategy. While New Zealand has been doing really well on some fronts, the Index helps us to take a comprehensive look across the range of indicators and identify areas where we might be falling behind, in addition to helping us measure our overall progress.”

Countries looking to learn more about their digital health maturity, how it compares to other countries, and how they can improve it are encouraged to reach out to info@digitalhealthindex.org to contribute data.

Media contact: For media inquiries, contact communications@globaldevincubator.org.

About HealthEnabled: HealthEnabled is an Africa-based organization that helps governments integrate proven life-saving digital health interventions into their health systems. Learn more at www.healthenabled.org.

About the Global Development Incubator (GDI): GDI is an organization that builds startups, incubates partnerships, and strengthens existing organizations for social impact around the world. Learn more at www.globaldevincubator.org.