

CONCEPT NOTE

Digital Health Revolution: Harnessing Technology for Impact

Background

Digital Health as a Growth Opportunity

Africa is experiencing rapid digital transformation, and health systems are at the center of this shift. With 60-80% of Africans owning a mobile phone, the continent is uniquely positioned to harness digital health tools. Technologies such as telemedicine, e-health, artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and interoperable digital platforms are transforming how care is delivered, financed, and managed.^[1] These technologies are not only improving patient outcomes but also creating efficiencies that translate into economic savings and growth opportunities.



The economic case for digital health is clear: the World Bank estimates that digitalization could add \$300 billion annually to Africa's economy by 2030, with health among the sectors positioned to benefit most.^[2] Beyond efficiency gains, digital health drives job creation, innovation, and private sector investment, while strengthening resilience to pandemics and other shocks.

Digital Health Priorities for Scale

Policy frameworks are also advancing. Forty-one African countries now have national digital health strategies, Africa CDC has developed the Digital Transformation Strategy (2023–2030) and the Africa HealthTech Marketplace (2024) to align investments, improve governance, and foster local innovation.^[3, 4] However, critical bottlenecks persist including fragmented platforms, insufficient data governance, limited financing, and gaps in workforce capacity. Addressing these barriers will determine whether digital health remains at the pilot stage or achieves system-wide, sustainable impact.

At the 2025 Africa Health Business Symposium, participants stressed that digital health must be approached as a strategic investment in human capital and economic growth, not just a health-sector add-on.

Five priority areas were discussed: the 5Cs of Digital Health:



Connectivity: Many facilities remain off-grid; more than 100,000 health facilities lack reliable power and internet.^[5]



Capacity: Healthcare workers require reskilling to adopt and sustain digital tools.



Collaboration: Partnerships between governments, innovators, and investors are essential to overcome fragmentation.



Capital: Despite innovation, most startups face “pilot fatigue” due to scarce financing and high investment risk.



Community: Solutions designed without local ownership often fail to scale or sustain impact.

Case studies reinforced these lessons:



In Ghana, digitizing the National Health Insurance Scheme improved transparency, reduced inefficiencies, and enabled evidence-based policymaking.^[6]



In Nigeria, AI-enabled TB and HIV programs boosted TB notifications by 40% and increased HIV testing among pregnant women by 86% within four months. The AIM250 initiative, launched in August 2024, introduced real-time performance dashboards, digital leaderboards, and feedback loops to enhance accountability and efficiency. By December 2024, its second phase established a unified data ecosystem, giving 150 stakeholders across all 37 states access to a single, reliable source of real-time program data.

These experiences illustrate that when properly financed, governed, and localized, digital health generates measurable health and economic returns.



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Session Objectives

This session will explore how digital health can be harnessed as a driver of impact, sustainability, and economic growth in Africa by:

- **Demonstrating how AI, telemedicine, and big data** are **improving health outcomes** while strengthening economic resilience.
- **Discussing financing and governance models** that de-risk digital health and ensure responsible, equitable adoption.
- **Showcasing scalable digital solutions** that create efficiencies, expand access, and attract investment.
- **Creating dialogue** between policymakers, innovators, investors, and civil society to accelerate Africa-led digital ecosystems.

Expected Outcomes

- » **Evidence-based recommendations** for embedding digital health in national investment and economic strategies.
- » **A roadmap** for mobilizing capital to scale proven innovations across diverse health settings.
- » **Consensus on policy actions** needed to strengthen data protection, interoperability, and digital workforce capacity.
- » **Commitments to foster multi-sectoral partnerships** that position digital health as a cornerstone of resilient and sustainable African health systems.

References

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