

# Bangladesh Digital Health Blueprint

## Summary

Despite significant efforts by the countries and the international organizations, the targets of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met to the extent of only 50% globally, with just 6 years left. Clearly the global community needs to accelerate the march and do more with less. Such a strategic shift of gears is possible only through extensive and intensive use of digital technologies and emerging technologies.

Digital Health is a strategic approach to use technology to strengthen the resilience to disease and improve health and wellness. It enhances the availability, efficiency, quality and accessibility of health services. It enables nations to lay a special focus on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Primary Health Care (PHC). Its emphasis lies in creating a system of person-controlled Personal Health Records, with consent-based access to the authorized healthcare professionals and providers.

Considering the expediency of digital health, the Ministry of Health (MoH) brought out the Digital Health Strategy in 2023. As a next step, MoH embarked on designing **Bangladesh Digital Health Blueprint (BDHB)**. A consultative approach has been adopted to develop the blueprint. The practices followed in Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India have been studied.

BDHB defines the **vision**, mission, and objectives of digital health. It identifies the challenges of health systems from the stakeholders' perspective and the means to address the same. It recommends the overall **architecture**, specifies the standards to be adopted, defines a capacity building plan, and above all, provides a time-bound and costed **action plan**.

BDHB proposes a set of **foundational principles** that all stakeholders need to hold as prime. The key principles emphasize person-controlled health records, PHC-centricity, centrally managed distributed architecture, openness and security- and privacy-by-design.

Bangladesh Digital Health Ecosystem Architecture (BDHEA) is composed of a set of **Core Building Blocks** (CBBs) and Common Building Blocks. The CBBs include Unique Health ID, Registries of Health Facilities, Health Professionals and Health Workers, Health Information Exchange and Consent Manager. The architecture is organized on a hub-and spoke model, with the Core acting as the hub and four nodes around the themes – Population Health, Health & Wellness, Health Workforce and Health Information. Such a modular approach is expected to lend agility and flexibility to the implementation of the blueprint. BDHEA is designed to operate at **3 levels** - the National, District and Upazila levels.

The blueprint identifies the enablers to be put in place for holistic design and implementation of digital health initiatives by the stakeholders in a coordinated manner. These include the legislative and policy support, the ICT infrastructure (Compute and Connectivity), the institutional mechanism for overseeing the mammoth initiative, and a capacity building plan. Suffice it to mention here three critical operational aspects that deal with HOW. Firstly, an expert organization dedicated to the cause of digital health needs to be established at the earliest to take the next steps in a mission-mode. This entity is tentatively named Bangladesh Digital Health authority. Secondly, the 4-level capacity building plan proposed here may be initiated to ensure that the policymakers, health professionals, Health tech professionals and the frontline health workers appreciate their role in

accomplishing this mission. Lastly, it is important to allocate the financial resources proposed in the blueprint to ensure that NDHM can move at the required speed.

It is hoped that Bangladesh Digital Health Blueprint will inspire all the stakeholders and trigger tangible action on multiple fronts to realize the lofty vision of the digital Health program.