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National Digital Health Transformation Convergence Workshop
The Republic of Iraq

In partnership with the Iraq Ministry of Health (MOH), the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COM-SEC), the Communications, Planning, Finance and other Ministries, UNICEF and development partners including the World Food Program (WFP), UNDP, WHO and the World Bank convened a Digital Health Transformation Convergence Workshop in Baghdad, Iraq on 16-18 January 2023. The Workshop launched the development of a National Digital Health Transformation Strategy and Digital Health Blueprint/Architecture to guide current and future digital health transformation investments and activities. Key outcomes of the Convergence Workshop included:

1. Inputs into a vision and strategy for digital health transformation
2. Development of a draft National Digital Health Strategy in the first quarter of 2023 by a Joint Committee under the leadership of the MOH, with broad ministerial and development partner representation
3. A longer-term plan for the Committee to prepare a National Digital Health Blueprint/Architecture that aligns with Iraq's National e-Government equivalent
4. Prioritization of digital birth registration as key enabler for digital health transformation
5. An analysis of the current approach to demand for, access to and delivery of health information and services, to facilitate user-centered design for digital transformation of the health sector
6. Promoting the inclusion of national health priorities and considerations within on-going digital transformation and eGovernment initiatives and plans
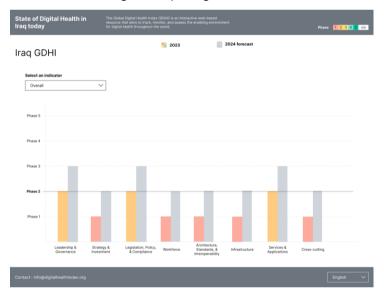
Digital Health Transformation Convergence

As defined by the World Health Organization, ***digital health*** *is the systematic application of information and communications technologies, computer science, and data to improve health and wellness for all, and strengthen resilience to disease by supporting informed decision-making by individuals, the health workforce, and health systems*. A convergence workshop can be a first step in aligning stakeholders' investments and action plans related to digital health transformation.

The aim of the Iraq Digital Health Convergence Workshop was to build on momentum for digital transformation in the country and to align health sector stakeholders with other partners and developments in digital transformation. In follow up, a Digital Health Strategy will be produced to present the vision, prioritized interventions and enablers that can ensure that digital health management information system (HMIS) approaches are embedded within a larger context for digital transformation in the Iraq public sector. A Digital Health Blueprint (Architecture) will complement the Strategy, describing business processes, privacy and security requirements, defining data standards, repositories and flows, and suggesting business applications (e.g. human resources, supplies, finance and budget management, etc.), hardware and infrastructure needs. These can be costed and a roadmap developed, to guide the deployment, monitoring and evaluation of digital health interventions and enablers.

The WHO and ITU eHealth Strategy Toolkit helps countries develop their national digital transformation strategies along seven key enabling environment components: 1. Leadership and governance, 2. Strategy and investment, 3. Legislation, policy, and compliance, 4. Workforce, 5. Architecture, standards, and interoperability, 6. Infrastructure, and 7. Services and Applications. The Global Digital Health Index (GDHI) Assessment was used as a rapid approach to identify the

current state of digital health maturity within these seven components (figure), and will be used to guide the development and monitoring of Iraq's Digital Health Transformation Strategy.

Overall Iraq is at the formative stage of Digital Health Transformation.

Foundations for Digital Health Transformation

The Republic of Iraq National Health Policy 2014 – 2023 describes the health system principles, objectives, and vision for improving population health and nutrition. The main strategic objective of the policy is to scale up progress towards universal health coverage (UHC). COMSEC has embarked on an ambitious digital transformation agenda across various sectors, including health, through the establishment of a National Data Center and various cross cutting eGovernment initiatives. Prioritized as part of digital transformation are a unified ID project with the Ministry of Information (MoI), birth registration with the MOH, and a unified tax ID. These foundational digital transformation investments can be leveraged to support, and should be informed by efforts related to the Digital Transformation of Health Strategy and Blueprint / Architecture. A Digital Landscape Analysis was conducted by UNDP and the University of Estonia and a costing for eGovernment has been conducted by the World Bank. WFP, in collaboration with various government ministries (Planning, Trade, Interior, Communication, Labour and Social Affairs and COMSEC) is facilitating the development of a single registry that can be used to support the delivery of social services. These efforts provide important opportunities that can directly benefit the health sector and can be informed by priorities identified during development of the Strategy.

Within the MOH the Directorates of Public Health (DoPH) and Planning and Resource Development (DoP) and partners are embarking on a process of digitalization of the Iraq HMIS, birth registration, and geospatial information. WHO and UNICEF are supporting the DoPH digitization of the health service delivery data using District Health Information Software (DHIS2), beginning with Iraq's national immunization program. The DoP is working with iMMAP and UNICEF to map health facilities, beneficiaries and catchment areas in Iraq as a foundational input for health service and systems planning, resource allocation and performance monitoring. It is recommended that the National Digital Health Transformation Strategy leverage these investments to inform prioritization of and better align digital health interventions and enablers.

Through these efforts, it is envisioned that digital transformation of the health sector will enable UHC by ensuring that every Iraqi man, woman, and child is registered and able to access health information and quality services when and where they need them. Service uptake data and individual's access to and benefit from Iraq's nascent social health insurance program will be another benefit of this effective use of digital technology.