



Enabling National Integrated Digital Health Systems through Market Facilitation

Background

Tremendous progress has been made to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their 2015 expiration date, but gaps remain, particularly in MDGs 4, 5 and 6, which relate to maternal and child health and diseases like malaria.

Technology – in the form of mobile health (mHealth), electronic health (eHealth), and what is more comprehensively known as “digital health” – can strengthen public health systems in low- and middle-income countries and help address these gaps. This includes the use of mobile phones to record births, report disease outbreaks, and support families and health workers with critical health information as well as tablets and computers to register patients, track lab results, and report on the overall performance of the health system. Over the last decade, mHealth in particular has improved health outcomes through increased coverage of proven health interventions, higher quality care, and lower costs.

A recent [study of the socio-economic impact of mHealth](#) conducted by the Boston Consulting Group found that targeted mHealth interventions can save lives and reduce healthcare costs significantly. Following increased awareness of these benefits, many low- and middle-income countries have already developed eHealth strategies and policies, prioritized digital health projects, and identified hundreds of promising health-related technologies.

Despite advancements in the use of technology to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes, countries face persistent challenges in implementation. Often, it is difficult for countries to bring coherence to tens of hundreds of systems and applications, mitigate the risks of large-scale investment, and bridge the “know-do gap” to actually develop and implement supportive policies and capacity. The result is that thousands of digital health pilots have launched, yet very few are reaching scale.

HealthEnabled is a non-profit organization based in South Africa that serves as a market facilitator enabling technology to strengthen health systems. The organization helps national digital health systems succeed by engaging national and global partners to refine policies, ensure programs are sustainable, and support the effective use of technologies for health.

The mHealth Alliance initially launched HealthEnabled – as the m- and eHealth Expert Learning Program (mHELP) – as a capacity building platform.

Today, HealthEnabled is an independent organization that strives to address the emerging misalignment between digital health policies, programs, and user needs. The organization helps countries make informed policy decisions, design programs for scale and sustainability, and adopt evidence-based public goods and practices that will lead to the effective use of digital health tools.



We are a market facilitator for integrated digital health systems

The HealthEnabled Vision and Mission

HealthEnabled’s vision is national integrated digital health systems in low- and middle-income countries that improve health and wellbeing for all people by 2020.

HealthEnabled’s mission is to improve health outcomes by aligning national policies, sustainable programs, and user needs to activate the effective and widespread use of integrated digital health tools in low- and middle-income countries

Through a systematic assessment and prioritization approach, HealthEnabled helps identify country-specific needs and serve as “matchmaker” between top implementers and global experts to develop privacy and security policies, connect technology platforms, and design systems for scale. HealthEnabled serves as a critical link between supply and demand for integrated digital health systems by acting as:

...**a broker**, who aligns the needs and priorities of governments and leading health service delivery NGOs

...*an advisor*, who provides neutral guidance to national governments to minimize the risk of their investments in integrated digital health systems, and

...*a convener*, who leverages tacit knowledge across countries and regional networks and shares best practices and models to inform global adoption.

The HealthEnabled Strategy

Rather than implementing digital health interventions directly, HealthEnabled aims to work with others to facilitate implementation by pursuing four strategic roles:

1. Increase capacity building for national policy and planning

- Support the development of policy frameworks by leveraging national and global partners along with the expert network
- Link learning and experience with national processes with advocacy efforts to promote global leadership and capacity

2. Build capacity of health service delivery organizations

- Support top health implementers to integrate digital health into their programs
- Develop guides and lead workshops/webinars for health NGOs

3. Raise the bar on standards and performance

- Develop a national scorecard, prize, implementation certification and/or practitioner accreditation to drive improved standards and performance of digital health programs

4. Build country and regional networks

- Build country councils and networks for knowledge sharing and alignment on standards
- Partner with regional hubs as knowledge providers and dissemination networks

The HealthEnabled Roadmap for the Next Five Years

Over the next five years, HealthEnabled will focus on up to five priority countries, starting with South Africa. The organization will work with the largest health implementers in parallel with the largest health sector funders, beginning with national governments. By doing so, HealthEnabled will establish models, practices, and evidence-based tools for implementing integrated digital health systems that can be applied across other low- and middle-income countries and supported by a range of partners.



HealthEnabled aims to facilitate policy and practice for scale by pursuing four strategic roles

HealthEnabled aims to accelerate the achievement of the health-related MDGs and strives towards universal health coverage in anticipation of the post-2015 development agenda. The organization aspires to set health targets and measure progress through systematic assessment of the population affected, population reached, coverage (by country), and cost-savings (by program).

To achieve these goals, HealthEnabled estimates a core operating budget of approximately US\$5 million from 2015-2020. At the end of five years, we anticipate HealthEnabled will conclude its work, as national policy, sustainable programs, and effective digital health use will be more closely aligned in target countries. At this stage, we anticipate that an active network of practitioners, supported by a clear evidence base and robust set of tools, will be able to carry this catalytic effort forward.

The HealthEnabled Team and Organization

HealthEnabled is led by Dr. Peter Benjamin as Executive Director and Dr. Patricia Mechael as Principal. Dr. Benjamin is an ICT expert with over 20 years of experience leading research and policy projects and organizations. Most recently, he was the Head of Capacity Building for the mHealth Alliance. Dr. Mechael is a celebrated mHealth researcher and strategic advisor, with nearly 20 years of global health experience with 15 years specifically in mHealth, and over 50 publications. Most recently, she was the Executive Director of the mHealth Alliance.

HealthEnabled also has established a vetted global network of 60 experts across 44 specialties who come from 34 countries and speak 35 languages. These experts provide thought leadership and help drive much of the work of the organization at the country and regional level. HealthEnabled is based in Cape Town, South Africa to be close to projects and governments in Africa, and in Washington, DC at the [Global Development Incubator](#) to be close to large public health implementers and donors.