



# Growing up **2030** in a digital world

**GOVERNING HEALTH FUTURES**  
THE LANCET & FINANCIAL TIMES COMMISSION

**The world is experiencing a very rapid and cumulative rate of change. Digital and data tools and technologies are fundamentally changing approaches to health and design of health systems – but governance models have not yet followed the pace of innovation.**

For the first time, a joint **The Lancet & Financial Times Commission** entitled *Governing health futures 2030: Growing up in a digital world* is exploring the convergence of digital health, artificial intelligence (AI), and other frontier technologies with universal health coverage (UHC) to support attainment of the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). In particular, this Commission will:

- Strive for integrated digital development that improves the health and well-being of children and young people in an ever more digital world
- Examine existing policies for digital health, AI, and UHC to identify those with the greatest potential to improve health and well-being, maximise health equity in resource-poor settings, and ensure human rights
- Deliver a clear set of recommendations on the governance of digital health, AI, and UHC, taking into account geopolitical, economic, and social factors.

## **Deliver on improving people's lives**

**It is of special importance to consider the implications of digitalisation in countries with high youth populations.**

Decades of neglect and underinvestment have had serious effects on the health and well-being of young people and adolescents aged 10 - 24 throughout the world, according to a 2016 *Lancet* Commission. With over 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world. Most are growing up in countries where preventable and treatable health problems remain a daily threat to their health, well-being, and life chances. The way digitalisation is governed and made accessible will either exacerbate these challenges or help resolve them. The present generation of young people may be the first to demand and to gain a clear set

of rights in relation to rapid technological development. These rights must allow them to “survive and thrive” and significantly improve their health and well-being.

## **Leveraging digital and mobile technologies for health**

**Governments, international organisations, development agencies, and business are increasingly exploring how smart technology, AI, and other digital health technologies can address inequities, and help accelerate progress in health.** In some countries, there have been unprecedented developments in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and mobile phone penetration. Today, over 40% of young people in Africa are already connected and nearly 300 million new subscribers are expected to access the mobile internet in Africa in the next decade. There is high potential to improve health through digitally - enabled health systems and behavioural interventions, but there are also deep concerns about ownership, privacy, human rights, and increasing commercialisation.

## **Integrated systems for equity and inclusion**

**At present, countries lack approaches that fully integrate digital health in all its forms with UHC and primary health care and are unable to ensure an equitable, appropriate, safe, and affordable digital response to the challenge of children's and young people's health.** One potential lies in creating seamless child and youth healthcare by embracing digital platforms, but such approaches also need to account for the impact of varied forms of datafication and dataveillance of children, from in utero through to the school years. The regulatory environment in many countries is often weak, and children and young people remain particularly vulnerable to data exploitation and marketing. Specific instruments to safeguard children's rights in the digital age are needed, as well as opportunities for them to participate in matters that affect their well-being and enable them to play an active part in society. Children and young people must benefit from, not be threatened by, a digital world; they must be involved in developing approaches to their future.

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## Responsible governance in an age of algorithms

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**Digital health, from mobile phones to AI, are not just an add-on of new technologies, but a force that will require the health sector to think far beyond its present paradigms.** Analysts agree that the healthcare sector will be revolutionised in the next 10 years – the question will be along which governance and business model this occurs. Deep learning, for example, with its power to recognise patterns, optimise for a specific outcome, and make predictions, will not only impact public health, epidemiology, and gold standards for evidence – but society overall. New ethical issues arise as digital opportunities will also provide the entry point to steer health behaviours in everyday life, generate new dependencies, as well as create a new relationship between personal data practices and big data politics.

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## The dynamics of the new digital health ecosystem

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**A new set of stakeholders from the digital and AI field – driven by different values, mindsets, and governance models – have entered the health sector.** In some countries, governments are heavily involved; in others, digital health is left to the market, or – especially in resource-poor settings – to the whims of development agencies and philanthropic actors. Digital and AI solutions can be rules-based, open, commercialised, or authoritarian; they can build on the involvement of citizens, communities, and patients or can be focused on health professionals only. There is a need to understand how uneven distribution, uneven quality, different levels of acceptance in different cultures, and different governance models impact successful application. To achieve impact and ensure rights, it is essential to think beyond the technology.

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## A call for international coordination and coherence

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**While technology races ahead, the response from international agencies and governments has been slow to address issues of governance and regulation, especially in relation to health, human rights and public goods.** The Secretary-General's 2019 High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation provides guidance on how to maximize the benefits of emerging digital technologies in various policy areas including health through better governance, with a view to also facilitate the participation of all stakeholder groups, including youth and women, in the digital sphere. Specialized UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) are also working on long-term digital strategies to inform their mission. Ensuring coherence will be critical as global actors move forward and different digital platforms and strategies emerge.

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## The Governing health futures 2030 Commission's approach

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In a world in which individual data is becoming one of the most valuable resources on the planet, the Commission supports the dialogues with a broad range of stakeholders on ethical guidelines, governance approaches, institutional responsibilities, and standards that need to be put in place in relation to health.

### The Governing health futures 2030 Commission will:

- Bring together **independent Commissioners** from a range of sectors and disciplines as well as being geographically diverse and gender balanced. They will meet four times around the world to ensure a broad input of voices. Between meetings, Commissioners will divide into working groups and conduct dialogues
- Have an **outreach strategy** in cooperation with the Financial Times and other partners, including youth organisations, to ensure the dialogue with developers, start-ups, and industry
- **Establish links** with other digital health and AI initiatives underway through its members and outreach and make full use of global, regional, and national events to debate and present its work and its findings
- **Build on the work of other Commissions**, high-level panels, and intergovernmental processes
- **Work with international agencies** – especially WHO, UNICEF, and OECD – to ensure a productive interface.

The **Commission Secretariat** is housed at the Global Health Centre at the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva. It coordinates the work of the Commission under the guidance of the Co-chairs.

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## Co-chairs

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- Professor **Ilona Kickbusch**, Chair, Global Health Centre at the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland
- Dr. **Anurag Agrawal**, Director, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi, India

