

Concept Note

Regional Open Digital Health Summit

19-21 November 2025, New Delhi

Organizers

- National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India (**Main Organizer**)
- National Health Authority (NHA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India
- World Health Organization South-East Asia Regional Office (WHO-SEARO)
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Dates

19-21 November 2025

Location

Delhi, India

Background

Despite growing global momentum in adopting open, interoperable digital health solutions, countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region (SEAR) continue to face systemic barriers to digital transformation. Health systems across the region—particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)—are often characterized by fragmented and siloed health information systems, limited interoperability, technology lock-in, and inadequate scalable digital infrastructure. These challenges result in inefficiencies in service delivery, poor data use for decision-making, and inequitable access to care, hindering progress toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC), International Health Regulations (IHR), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While several SEAR Member States have developed or are working on adopting national digital health blueprints (with three already adopted and five in endorsement stages), the implementation of open, standards-based, and modular digital solutions remains limited. The absence of cohesive governance, shared architectural frameworks, and regionally aligned investments has led to redundant, small-scale initiatives that fail to scale or integrate across programs and sectors. There is an urgent need to shift from fragmented point solutions to interoperable, people-centered digital health ecosystems built on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and aligned with global frameworks such as the WHO Global Strategy on Digital Health (extended to 2027) and the full-STAC approach (open Standards, Technologies, Architectures, and Content).

The global digital health landscape has faced persistent challenges, including fragmented health information systems, limited interoperability, and technology lock-in, stemming from a project-centric approach with siloed funding. Significant efforts include the adoption of HL7 FHIR standards, Open Health Information Exchange (OpenHIE), and WHO SMART Guidelines. Notable regional examples are India's Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM), which integrates open standards to enhance national health systems. Global policy frameworks, such as the UN Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and Principles for Digital Development, reinforce the importance of interoperability and governance.

Building on the inaugural Open Digital Health Summit in Nairobi, Kenya (1-3 December 2024, <https://fullstac.health/>), organized by WHO in partnership with HL7 and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Regional Open Digital Health Summit in Delhi/NCR serves as a key follow-up. The Nairobi event convened developers, architects, and policymakers for hands-on workshops on "Building with FHIR" and "DPIs for Health," promoting knowledge exchange and capacity building. The Delhi summit, proposed by WHO-SEARO in collaboration with NeGD and NHA under MoHFW, India, adapts this approach to SEAR's specific needs, accelerating the adoption of interoperable solutions to achieve UHC.

This technical, multi-stakeholder forum will strengthen regional collaboration, hands-on learning, and alignment around standards-based transformation. It aligns with WHO-SEARO's work plan to advance digital health priorities, addressing data fragmentation, scalability constraints, and emerging opportunities like AI-enabled innovation in resource-constrained settings.

Objectives

The three-day Regional Open Digital Health Summit in New Delhi aims to advance interoperable, standards-based digital health ecosystems in the South-East Asia Region (SEAR). The Summit will include two tracks, one focused on **Standards** and another on **DPIs**. Through hands-on learning, expert-led discussions, and peer collaboration, the Summit will achieve the following objectives:

- **Enhance Capacity for Interoperable, People-Centered Digital Health Systems:** Build technical and strategic capacity to design and implement interoperable digital health systems using standards like HL7 FHIR, WHO SMART Guidelines, and terminologies (ICD, LOINC). Hands-on workshops will train participants in tools like Open Health Stack's Android FHIR SDK to ensure continuity of care, consistent data exchange, and longitudinal personal health records, addressing fragmented systems and supporting WHO's Global Strategy on Digital Health.
- **Promote Standards-Based Development and Innovation:** Equip participants with knowledge of FHIR-based tools, open-source libraries (e.g., HAPI FHIR, Open Health Stack), and WHO SMART Guidelines to develop scalable, AI-enabled digital health solutions. Expert-led sessions will focus on leveraging generative AI and analytics to address regional health priorities, fostering innovation, and reducing technical debt.

- **Support Integration and Modernization of Legacy Systems:** Provide strategies for integrating legacy health information systems with modern standards like HL7 FHIR. Workshops will showcase hybrid approaches that may enable cost-effective upgrades to achieve interoperability and scalability without complete system overhauls, addressing SEAR's data silo challenges.
- **Foster Regional Collaboration and Governance:** Facilitate knowledge sharing and networking among SEAR Member States to promote best practices and collective investment in digital public infrastructure (DPI). By establishing a South-East Asia digital health and FHIR community, the Summit will foster trust among Ministries of Health and ICT, supporting goals like personal health records, care continuity, and supply chain optimization, inspired by models like India's Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission.
- **Strengthen Digital Health Governance and Policy Frameworks:** Enhance capacity to develop governance frameworks that enforce interoperability standards and certification processes. Sessions will guide policymakers in implementing procurement policies and national governance structures aligned with OpenHIE, ensuring sustainable, country-led digital transformation in SEAR.

This Summit delivers a blended program to achieve specific objectives: enhancing technical capacity, advancing standards-based expertise, integrating legacy systems, establishing a SEAR FHIR Community, and initiating country-specific roadmaps. The agenda aligns with the full-STAC framework and WHO's Global Strategy on Digital Health, featuring expert-led talks, hands-on workshops, case studies, participant-led sessions, and networking events in a hybrid format.

Specific objectives

The Regional Open Digital Health Summit in New Delhi aims to deliver measurable outputs to advance interoperable digital health ecosystems in SEAR. Success will be evaluated through participant feedback, post-event surveys, and follow-up assessments within six months.

- **Enhance Technical Capacity for Interoperable Digital Health Systems:** Equip at least 80% of participants with skills to implement interoperable systems using HL7 FHIR, CQL, and terminologies (ICD, LOINC, SNOMED GPS) via workshops on tools like Open Health Stack Android FHIR SDK. Outputs include 50 participants completing a FHIR-based prototype and a documented increase in proficiency via assessments, supporting continuity of care and personal health records.
- **Advance Expertise in Standards-Based Tools and DPI:** Increase expertise among 75% of participants in FHIR, WHO SMART Guidelines, and DPI for programs like immunization and NCD management. Outputs include a resource toolkit with FHIR profiles and 10 SEAR-specific use cases developed during the Summit, documented in project submissions, to address regional health priorities.
- **Develop Strategies for Legacy System Integration:** Provide strategies to 70% of participants for integrating legacy systems with FHIR-based architectures. Outputs

include five SEAR-tailored integration frameworks validated through simulations and a 20% increase in confidence in modernization, measured by surveys, enabling scalable upgrades.

- **Establish the South-East Asia Regional FHIR Community:** Initiate a regional FHIR community to develop a FHIR curriculum and promote interoperability. Outputs include a community charter endorsed by eight SEAR Member States, a draft curriculum framework, and commitments from 30 stakeholders for ongoing activities, measured through agreements.
- **Initiate Country-Specific Roadmaps:** Facilitate eight country-specific roadmaps for digital health transformation, aligned with OpenHIE and WHO SMART Guidelines. Outputs include preliminary roadmaps validated by national authorities and a follow-up report documenting progress on 50% of milestones within six months, ensuring UHC alignment.
- **Advance surveillance data standards:** Promote the adoption and adaptation of WHO surveillance data standards in the respective country context and propose a data standards framework through collaboration between national surveillance technical officers from the MoH/National Public Health Institutes and digital health experts.

Additional Enhancements

- **Pre-Workshop Webinars:** Two virtual sessions (last week of September and mid-October) will be conducted to share the agenda, clarify case study expectations, and cover FHIR/DPI fundamentals. These sessions will provide an opportunity to share the detailed agenda and clarify expectations for the case study presentations.
- **Reading Materials and References:** Provide an introduction to FHIR, the full-STAC article, and other references/videos/repositories, the Nairobi summit site, and the Regional ODHS event page.

The Regional Open Digital Health Summit in New Delhi targets a diverse cohort to advance interoperable digital health ecosystems in SEAR. Aligned with the full-STAC framework and WHO's Global Strategy on Digital Health, participant profiles ensure technical, policy, and strategic expertise, with 3–4 participants per country funded by WHO-SEARO. NeGD funds over 80 Indian participants from State Governments, while the WHO Country Offices fund focal points. NeGD, as the main organizer, is covering the cost of venue, logistics, and other operations related to the Summit. WHO-SEARO is sponsoring the costs related to the participation of the member states.

Target Audience

The summit will convene 100-150 participants, including:

- **Digital Health Experts:** Professionals from Ministries of Health with experience in health information systems and digital health strategy.
- **Solution Architects:** Technical leads from Ministries of ICT or digital affairs responsible for national digital health architectures.

- **Software Developers:** Developers from public and private sectors building digital health applications, particularly those supporting Ministries of Health.
- **WHO Country Office Focal Points:** Representatives supporting national digital health strategies (Bangladesh, Maldives, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Bhutan- (five) member states in the process of endorsing digital health blueprints).

Participant Profiles

For Maldives, Bhutan, Timor-Leste, DPR Korea (3 Participants per Country)

1 Expert in Health Information Systems, and Digital Health Solutions (Ministry of Health)

- **Role:** Senior expert overseeing health information systems or public health programs
- **Responsibilities:** Adopt FHIR, WHO SMART Guidelines, and terminologies (ICD, LOINC); contribute to roadmaps (Objective 5); participate in FHIR workshops (Objective 1).
- **Contribution:** Share national priorities, align roadmaps with local needs.
- **Rationale:** Translates summit outcomes into national strategies, leveraging models like India's ABDM.

2 Official or Lead for Digital Health Strategy and Architecture (Ministry of ICT)

- **Role:** Senior official driving digital health strategy or DPI development.
- **Responsibilities:** Develop governance frameworks (Objective 2); support SEAR FHIR Community (Objective 4); design architectures (Objective 5).
- **Contribution:** Align health and ICT sectors, contribute to DPI policy discussions.
- **Rationale:** Ensures coordinated governance to address data fragmentation.

3 Senior Technical Officer on Surveillance from Ministry of Health or National Public Health Institute

- **Role:** Senior national technical officer from MoH or National Public Health Institute coordinating disease surveillance with early warning functions.
- **Responsibilities:** Contextualize WHO health data surveillance standards to national insights for scaling settings; identify interoperability issues and system gaps (surveillance breakout).
- **Contribution:** Provide national insights for scaling health surveillance data standards; validate integration frameworks across platforms; promote learning through country innovations.
- **Rationale:** Support advancing surveillance data standards in the country context in collaboration with digital health experts.

For Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Thailand (4 Participants per Country)

1 Expert in Health Information Systems, and Digital Health Solutions (Ministry of Health)

- **Role:** Senior expert or official responsible for scaling initiatives like India's ABDM or Thailand's health exchange, or Sri Lanka's National EHR.
 - **Responsibilities:** Lead FHIR workshops (Objective 1); share case studies (Objective 2); support collaboration (Objective 4).
 - **Contribution:** Provide scalable models, validate integration frameworks (Objective 3).
 - **Rationale:** Showcases advanced implementations for regional learning.
- 2 Official or Lead for Digital Health Strategy and Architecture (Ministry of ICT)**
- **Role:** Senior official integrating cross-sectoral DPIs with health systems.
 - **Responsibilities:** Lead DPI and governance sessions (Objective 2); develop SEAR FHIR Community curriculum (Objective 4); draft roadmaps (Objective 5).
 - **Contribution:** Align policies with OpenHIE, drive cross-country learning.
 - **Rationale:** Bridges sectors for sustainable transformation.
- 3 Senior Technical Officer on Surveillance from Ministry of Health or National Public Health Institute**
- **Role:** Senior national technical officer from MoH or National Public Health Institute coordinating disease surveillance with early warning functions.
 - **Responsibilities:** Contextualize WHO health data surveillance standards to national settings; identify interoperability issues and system gaps (surveillance breakout).
 - **Contribution:** Provide national insights for scaling health surveillance data standards; validate integration frameworks across platforms; promote learning through country innovations.
 - **Rationale:** Support advancing surveillance data standards in the country context in collaboration with digital health experts.
- 4 Developer Responsible for Building Digital Health Applications (Ministry of Health or Partner Organization)**
- **Role:** Developer designing digital health applications.
 - **Responsibilities:** Build FHIR-native apps (Objective 1); explore GenAI (Objective 2); develop integration strategies (Objective 3).
 - **Contribution:** Produce FHIR prototypes, contribute to SEAR FHIR Community (Objective 4).
 - **Rationale:** Ensures practical implementation of technical outcomes.

WHO Country Office Focal Points (Bangladesh, Maldives, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Bhutan-(five) member states in the process of endorsing digital health blueprints)

- **Role:** Focal points supporting digital health strategy/blueprints, funded by WHO Country Offices with WR approval.
- **Responsibilities:** Support roadmap development (Objective 5); align with WHO SMART Guidelines (Objective 2); strengthen collaboration (Objective 4).
- **Contribution:** Ensure contextually relevant roadmaps, facilitate follow-up.

- **Rationale:** Enhances WHO's coordination, aligning with global priorities.

Additional Considerations

- **Funding:** NeGD funds over 80 Indian participants; WHO funds country digital health focal points. Maximum 150 in-person, unlimited virtual participants.
- **Diversity:** Balances gender and sub-regional representation for equity.
- **Sustainability:** Participants commit to post-summit actions, tracked via surveys and six-month assessments.

Expected Outcomes

- **Enhanced Technical Capacity:** Participants will gain skills to plan and implement interoperable digital health systems using open standards.
- **Knowledge of Standards:** Increased expertise in leveraging FHIR, WHO SMART Guidelines, and DPI for health programs like immunization and NCD management.
- **Legacy System Integration:** Strategies to adapt existing systems to FHIR-based architectures.
- **Regional Network:** Establishment of a South-East Asia digital health community for ongoing collaboration.
- **Actionable Plans:** Country-specific roadmaps for advancing digital health transformation.

Future Impact

The summit aims to become an annual event, fostering sustained progress toward UHC through digital transformation.

Evaluation

Success will be measured through participant feedback, post-event surveys, and follow-up assessments of national digital health advancements.