Digital Health:
Planning National Systems

The world's most comprehensive Digital Health course for national planners

USAID · ITU · World Health Organization · digital square · TechChange

Summary

Digital Health: Planning National Systems equips national planners to create comprehensive digital health strategies and strong governance structures. *DH:PNS* is a Content Global Good that is available in multiple learning modalities and languages, including English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

Services Used

- Curriculum review and adaptation
- Content development
- Synchronous course facilitation
- Blended course development and facilitation
- Pilot management
- Community of Practice (CoP) management
- Multilingual translation & localization
- Training of Trainers (ToT)

About the Client

TechChange works with a consortium of partners to manage and deliver *Digital Health: Planning National Systems* including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Digital Square (operated by PATH) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Need:
Capacity Strengthening for Ministries of Health

Since the 1990s, health systems around the world have experimented with digitized interventions in an effort to improve health outcomes. But as the uptake of singular digital interventions grew, many of these interventions were implemented in siloed ways. This resulted in fragmentation, particularly in low-to-middle income countries. Health system fragmentation can cause significant problems that ultimately impact healthcare delivery and public health outcomes.

In order to address these issues, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other stakeholders identified a need for training around national digital health strategy development and planning to strengthen the capacity of national planners throughout the world.

The Solution:
A comprehensive course for busy health system leaders

DH:PNS was conceptualized as a course primarily for national planners, but also for other digital health practitioners, multilaterals, and funders working closely with government health officials, to provide them with comprehensive training and hands-on practice managing the digital health national planning process. Ministry of Health officials (the primary audience) can be a hard group to reach, so the format and real-world focus of *DH:PNS* was designed with their specific needs and constraints in mind.

Training both local and global actors on the national planning process is vital to ensure alignment and cooperation on digital health.

Course Design

DH:PNS began as an 11-day in-person workshop conducted by the WHO in Lesotho and Benin. TechChange attended to support and consult on course improvements, and then began a comprehensive curriculum review of existing WHO and WHO-ITU resources and other major digital health frameworks in order to transform the workshop into a course. TechChange developed the synchronous, blended and asynchronous versions of the course available today, vetted and validated by not only subject matter experts, but also the target audiences.

Key Stats

More than **700 course graduates** from **90+ countries**.

More than **50 countries'** digital health systems impacted.

90% of participants reported the course filled a critical knowledge and skills gap.

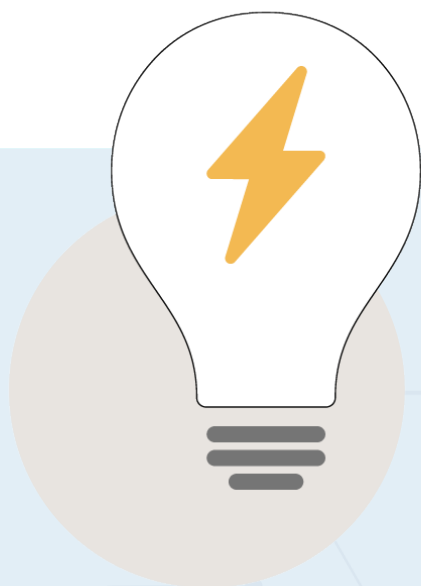**100% of participants** said that course learning objectives were achieved.

21 trainers trained to deliver *DH:PNS*.

250 Alumni using the COP (or have attended alumni event).

4 language versions available: English, French, Spanish, Portuguese.

"**Participating in *Digital Health: Planning National Systems* gave me the skills and knowledge I needed to strategically support the development and finalization of Lao PDR's five-year digital health national strategy using an enterprise planning approach.**"
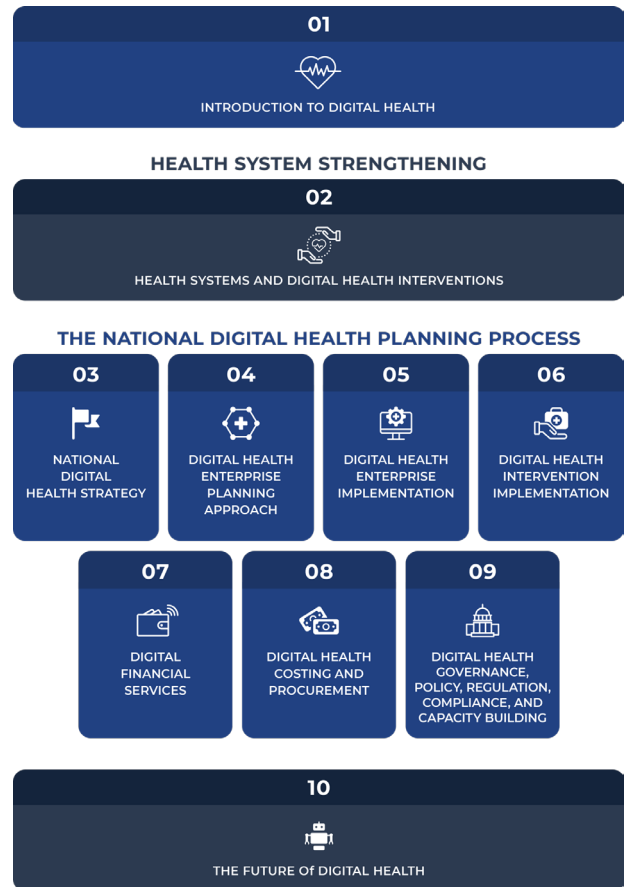
Dilip - WHO Regional Officer

Scaffolded Curriculum with Interactive Design

Each module in this TechChange-designed digital health planning course builds on the one before it. *DH:PNS* begins with establishing a foundational understanding of digital health, including examples of what it comprises and key terms and concepts, such as standards and interoperability. Subsequent modules delve into other relevant areas of digital health challenges, solutions, delivery models, and strategies - all leveraging an enterprise planning approach.
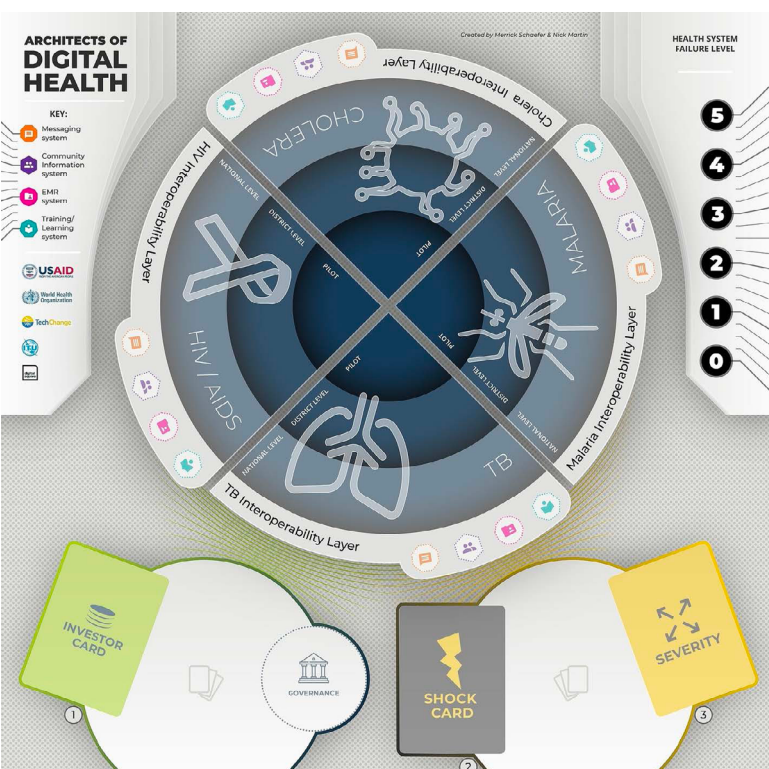
The final module emphasizes the importance of governance, and reviews stakeholder coordination, policy and regulation, as well as how to prepare a capable workforce. All modules include interactive activities, opportunities for reflection and practice, and TechChange's signature beautiful design.

01
INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL HEALTH

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

02
HEALTH SYSTEMS AND DIGITAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

THE NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH PLANNING PROCESS

03	04	05	06
NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH STRATEGY	DIGITAL HEALTH ENTERPRISE PLANNING APPROACH	DIGITAL HEALTH ENTERPRISE IMPLEMENTATION	DIGITAL HEALTH INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION

07	08	09
DIGITAL FINANCIAL SERVICES	DIGITAL HEALTH COSTING AND PROCUREMENT	DIGITAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE, POLICY, REGULATION, COMPLIANCE, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

10
THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL HEALTH

Board Game: Applied Learning in Scenario-Based Play

A highlight of the *DH:PNS* course experience is *Architects of Digital Health*, a collaborative game that provides participants with scenario-based play on building a digital health system in a fictional country facing challenges from HIV/AIDs, cholera, malaria, and tuberculosis.

Players (course participants) are cast as health systems leaders who need to work together to thoughtfully scale digital health intervention to address these public health needs. The course helps learners to conceptualize and put into practice several of the key concepts of the course, including interoperability, scale, and governance. The goal is to work together to fight fragmentation and achieve national scale on the (fictional) coordinated interventions.

The game is also *available free of charge* with comprehensive instructions for anyone wishing to play, or to use as a learning tool in other programs.

Final Project: Putting Theory into Practice

DH:PNS concludes with a final group project. This capstone assignment was designed with feedback from past participants, many of whom expressed a desire to share what they are doing in their home countries and contextualize the course concepts in that setting. Final projects may be on Digital Health Intervention Implementation, Budgeting and Costing Digital Health Interventions, Digital Health National Strategy Development, or another topic of their own choosing. They are intended to give all course participants the ability to ask each other questions to better understand "real world" experiences, exchange lessons learned, and build a support network with each other.

Multiple Learning Modalities

DH:PNS is primarily delivered *in cohorts* of 25-100 people through implementing institutions, such as National Ministries of Health, funders, or NGOs. In these facilitated learning cohorts, participants progress through the interactive online modules together on the *TechChange platform*, resulting in opportunities for connection and collaboration.

A self-paced (asynchronous) version of the course is also *available online* for people who might not have access to the full cohort learning experience. This open learning opportunity ensures that DH:PNS will have the widest possible reach.

While TechChange continues to deliver DH:PNS in all of its modalities to Ministry of Health officials globally upon request, the materials for all modalities of the course are freely available to organizations wishing to implement on their own via a comprehensive *Knowledge Repository*.

Thanks to the course's proven efficacy and accessible, adaptable materials, DH:PNS was *designated as a Content Global Good* in 2023.

Active Learning Community for Ministry of Health Officials

All participants who complete the course requirements of the cohort-driven deliveries are eligible to join the _Alumni Community of Practice_, a vibrant forum that allows graduates to stay in touch with one another. The Alumni CoP members receive DH:PNS course updates, are informed on new digital health initiatives or trends, and convene at least once a quarter for alumni-driven knowledge-sharing events.

DH:PNS at Scale: Training of Trainers (ToT)

Systems-level change starts with people. Better health outcomes in low-to-middle-income countries are possible when national planners have the skills, resources, and networks they need to positively impact national health infrastructure, and direct outside investments to meet the needs of their country. _Digital Health: Planning National Systems_ is the solution to equip the right people, with the right skills, to make a real difference where it matters most.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

TechChange maintains a cadre of qualified _DH:PNS_ trainers, but also designed a Training of Trainers (ToT) to ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of the course. In the ToT, trainers from implementing organizations who are alumni of the course are equipped with the facilitation skills they need to deliver _DH:PNS_ in any modality they'd like. The _new DH:PNS website_ and _Alumni Community of Practice_ provide opportunities for certified trainers and other alumni to continually engage with upcoming cohorts and learning opportunities.

DH:PNS Localization

Another key barrier to access and scale of any global e-learning program is often language. TechChange has translated *DH:PNS* from English into Spanish, French, and Portuguese – with certified trainers in all four languages – and wishes to add additional global languages in the future.

Results

DH:PNS boasts a completion metric of nearly 65%—that is, about two thirds of participants who enroll in the cohort-based course deliveries successfully finish all ten modules. And they put what they've learned into practice! More than 50 countries' digital health systems have been impacted by the participation of national planners in this course, 90% of whom reported that the course filled a critical knowledge and skill gap for them.

The course has achieved both scale and sustainability through its designation as a Content Global Good and the sustained investment and engagement by USAID and WHO over the past 5+ years. Furthermore, 21 trainers have been trained to deliver *DH:PNS* to new audiences and 250 alumni have used the COP or attended an alumni session.

The course has been consistently highly reviewed by participants, including those with differing levels of digital literacy and connectivity. **One hundred percent of participants reported learning objectives were achieved**, and this is corroborated by pre- and post-course assessments that showed that participant knowledge and self-efficacy in key digital health concepts increased dramatically. Based on these results, and ongoing demand, *DH:PNS* will continue to create change in the digital health space, including via new content and tools that are being developed on hot topics like telehealth and cybersecurity.

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