

UGHE's Digital Health Applied Leadership Program: Building a New Cadre of Digital Health Leaders

The University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) through Digital Health at PATH has introduced the Digital Health Applied Leadership Program (DHALP) to advance the skills and capabilities of digital health practitioners and stakeholders from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Guinea while also strengthening digital health systems. The concept of the Program was co-created at the November 2019 Digital Health Leadership Capacity Building Conference by representatives from 17 low and middle income country governments, the WHO, investors, and educators.

Rwanda is one of the countries at the forefront of creating an enabling environment for digital health strategies to thrive especially in ensuring quality healthcare for all and UGHE, situated in the Northern province of Rwanda, is extremely honored to lead the DHALP project with its consortium partners for the expansion of digital health across francophone and anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

The DHALP is a year-long learning program that enhances participants' capacity to successfully lead and execute digital health programs. Since July 2021, the DHALP's implementation consortium that includes the University of Thies, the Stanford Center for Health Education, and Inshuti Mu Buzima - Partners in Health in Rwanda, led by the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE), has been preparing the program, involving material development and participant selection through rigorous assessment.

Other partners include the World Bank, and TechChange. In support of DHALP, UGHE received funding from Digital Square, a PATH-led initiative funded and designed by the United States Agency for International Development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and a consortium of other investors; and BACKUP Health, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), co-financed by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

"It is now very clear Africa's serious challenge in access to health care and education cannot be addressed without the utilization of digital solutions. Hence, the continent needs rise to the occasion and create opportunities so that its professionals are ready for the future. Once such opportunity is this outstanding Digital Health Applied Leadership Program, and I hope we can make best use of it. The future of health care delivery is indeed digital" - Abebe Bekele, MD, FCS, FACS, Professor of Surgery, Dean: School of Medicine, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Research Affairs)

At an individual level, learners who complete the Program will receive a digital health leader practitioner certificate, demonstrating that they have acquired relevant technical skills and knowledge to implement, scale, and sustain digital health interventions. In addition, they will have

gained an understanding of how to build inclusive teams, articulate a strategy, advocate for resources, and collaborate effectively across departments, as well as with donors and other partners. At the country level, teams of learners will gain the necessary skills and experience to strengthen governance structures required to drive robust, country-owned digital health programs. At the global level, the DHALP will establish a global network of practitioners who can continue learning from each other and advocate for the policies and resources needed from multilateral institutions, donors, and the private sector to advance global digital health. The first workshop began on May 4th 2022 and will end in April 2023.

Sub-Saharan African governments are committed to using digital technologies to improve their health systems, increase access to health data, and advance health equity. Scaling up digital health systems requires strengthening digital health knowledge and leadership skills across the health workforce. However, no program currently exists that focuses on building the professional and institutional capacity within governments, and promoting the level of interagency participation, leadership, and coordination required enabling digital transformation for health systems strengthening. The Digital Health Applied Leadership Program (DHALP) is designed to address this challenge and create a community of digital health leaders.

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