

State of the art digital health projects build on existing evidence, and normative guidelines, frameworks, and tools in various areas, ranging from software development to financing and equitable programing. In the context of the GIZ Digital Innovation in Pandemic Control (DIPC) Initiative, the Robert Koch Institute, Germany, has conducted a comprehensive analysis on key digital public health definitions and concepts, and on 75 normative resources for digital health programing across 11 digital health topics, published between 2012 and early 2024 [\[link\]](#). Findings from the report have been summarized in form of 20 easy to use Factsheets.

The current factsheet (16/20) summarizes the findings on the identified **Guidelines for Gender Equity, Inclusion and Ethics**. It highlights frameworks and tools for integrating these important considerations into digital health programs, addressing disparities and fostering inclusive development.

Factsheet 16

Guidelines, Frameworks and Tools for Gender Equity, Inclusion and Ethics



Target Audience

Primary Users: Developers, Healthcare Providers, Ministries of Health, Donors

Secondary Users: Government bodies

Relevance

Digital health technologies, while transformative, are not inherently neutral and can inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities or create new disparities. Barriers such as lack of electricity, poor network connectivity, high costs of devices, and digital literacy gaps disproportionately affect marginalized populations, including women and rural communities.

Digital inclusion is a critical social determinant of health and a cornerstone for equitable healthcare. Inclusive DH interventions must address socioeconomic, geographic, and cultural barriers by designing user-friendly tools tailored to diverse populations.

Findings

Number of resources identified: 10

The texts highlight critical considerations for ensuring DH solutions are inclusive, equitable, and ethically sound. While these resources offer valuable guidance, our review revealed several persistent challenges that require continued attention to achieve truly inclusive and equitable digital health systems:

- **Privacy and Ethical Data Use:** Robust data governance is critical to protect user rights and build public trust.
- **Access Disparities:** Marginalized groups face barriers like digital literacy gaps, affordability, and cultural norms.
- **Underrepresentation in Data:** Inclusive, diverse datasets are essential to address health disparities.
- **Human-Centered Design:** Iterative, user-focused approaches ensure solutions meet diverse needs.
- **AI Ethics:** Clear governance is needed to prevent bias and ensure equitable AI implementation.

Digital inclusion must be prioritized as a social determinant of health, with targeted strategies to ensure DH solutions are accessible, equitable, and impactful.

Frameworks

Digital Health Equity Framework (DHEF)

A theoretical framework (Crawford & Serhal, 2020), which integrates health equity with digital health determinants to address health disparities.

Published by: Academic Paper

Year: 2020

Language: English

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Framework Expanded for Digital Health Equity

A theoretical framework (Safiya Richardson, 2022) on DH equity, which underscores the need to consider both digital determinants of health (DDoH) and social determinants of health, especially for those digitizing health solutions.

Published by: Academic Paper

Year: 2022

Language: English

Why Gender Matters for Digital Health

A technical brief that focuses on gender-sensitive programming in DH and emphasizes that DH solutions should address differences and inequalities for empowering marginalized groups.

Published by: GIZ

Year: 2021

Language: English

Youth-centred digital health interventions

A framework to guide the development and implementation of DH solutions for young people, targeting a range of professionals from designers to funders.

Published by: WHO

Year: 2021

Language: English

Reports

Roundtable on Digital Inclusion

key document covering digital inclusion's definitions and themes, emphasizing an intersectional approach to tackle challenges like racism, gender discrimination, and biases against marginalized groups.

Published by: UN

Year: NA

Language: English

Bridging the digital gender divide

Aims to support women's equitable participation in the digital economy by addressing barriers to digital gender equality. It provides policy recommendations for policymakers, government officials, and stakeholders to bridge the digital gender gap.

Published by: OECD

Year: 2018

Language: English

Guidelines

Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health

A guide that aids governments and technical partners plan and implement digital health initiatives aligned with national health system objectives.

Published by: WHO

Year: 2021

Language: English, French, Spanish

Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health – Guidance on large multi-modal models

Advocates for stronger and more unified funding support and offers six strategic recommendations

Published by: WHO

Year: 2024

Language: English

Standards

Global Standards for accessibility of telehealth services

Provides technical requirements to improve telehealth usability for people with disabilities, ensuring services are effective, safe, and inclusive.

Published by: WHO & ITU

Year: 2022

Language: English, French, Portuguese

Toolkits

GenderTech Toolkit: Building digital solution for, with, and by girls

To aid digital innovators in creating solutions that cater to girls, with the aim to bridge the gender digital divide.

Published by: UNICEF

Year: 2020

Language: English



This is based on "[Navigating the Digital Health Ecosystem: A Review of Key Guidelines, Frameworks, and Tools](#)"

Read the full report [here](#) or scan the QR code

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