Co-creating health futures: youth leadership in digital health and data governance

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS FOR HEALTH LAB
GOVERNING HEALTH FUTURES 2030

Authors*: Whitney Gray, Digital Transformations for Health Lab (DTH-Lab)

*See reports for full list of contributors and partner organizations.

Introduction

DTH-Lab positions young people as active partners in shaping digital health governance. Since 2021, DTH-Lab has been working with youth at the global and regional level to co-create a blueprint for digital first health systems (**DFHS**) that accounts for the needs and concerns of young people. This blueprint will set out young people's vision for DFHS and guide different actors – from policymakers to technology companies – on the steps required to make this vision a reality.

Methodology

Following a youth-led campaign and consultations with global youth organizations, DTH-Lab held nine regional co-creation workshops and seven focus group discussions in 2024-25 to capture young people's insights on design and governance of their ideal DFHS.

DTH-Lab convened over 600 young people from 80 countries in regional workshops and focus group discussions in co-creating a DFHS blueprint. Using participatory and co-creation methods, youth generated context-specific, rights-based recommendations for inclusive and equitable digital first health systems.

Objective

- Build bridges between young people and decision makers
- Empower young people as co-creators in global health governance
- Strengthen youth capacities to meaningfully participate in policy and health system design through intergenerational dialogue and exchange.
- Generate evidence-based, youth-led recommendations that advance inclusive digital health governance.

600+	**80**	**22**
young people consulted	countries	youth organizations

Major findings

The regional consultations built on global findings identifying six core values that must underpin digital first health systems.

A CORE SET OF SHARED VALUES TO FORM THE FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS OF ANY DFHS:

1. Equitable
2. Trustworthy
3. Humanistic
4. Ethical
5. Inclusive
6. Accountable

TOP 8 YOUTH-IDENTIFIED BARRIERS TO REALIZING DFHS:

1. Weak data governance
2. Digital divides
3. Under-equipped health workforce
4. Fragmented digital health services
5. Low political will to engage youth
6. Digital illiteracy
7. Unreliable digital infrastructure
8. Resistance to change

THE **5 KEY TENSIONS** IDENTIFIED BY YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL THAT STAKEHOLDERS MUST AIM TO BALANCE WHEN DESIGNING DFHS:

1. Affordability / Data privacy
2. Accessibility / Innovation
3. Existing / New
4. Online / Offline
5. Sustainability / Scale

THE MAIN HEALTH CONCERNS TO YOUNG PEOPLE THAT DFHS SHOULD FOCUS ON:

1. Mental health
2. Fitness and nutrition
3. Sexual and reproductive health
4. Climate-related health issues
5. Non-communicable diseases

Conclusion

The insights from young people have culminated into a global report (2024) and a regional report (2025). The findings showcase universally agreed values, challenges that must be overcome, tensions that must be balanced and key health priority areas DFHS but account for. The regional perspectives highlight both shared priorities and unique challenges, giving stakeholders a clearer picture of what works for diverse youth communities.

These reports are key steps towards a global DFHS blueprint that translates youth voices into practical guidance for policymakers, technology companies and health leaders.

Policy recommendations

DFHS should prioritize:

1. Equity as a core principle
2. Transparent, accountable data governance
3. Youth as formal co-creators
4. Digital and AI literacy investment
5. Human-centred, rights-based design
6. Cross-sector DFHS collaboration

Read the DFHS reports

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