



Digital Square manifesto

Our vision is a world where **anyone, anywhere can safely access digitally enhanced health care**. In this world, individuals are equipped with the information they need to manage their own health, how to stay healthy, and when to seek professional care. Health worker shortages and medical stockouts no longer plague health systems. More efficient, higher-quality service delivery allows governments and private providers to affordably extend health insurance coverage to everyone; families are no longer mired in poverty from their health bills. And importantly, health innovations no longer take 20 or more years to cascade from early adopters to the global majority.

This world is a dream, but it's an achievable one. Digitally enhanced health care has already proven its impact, and the world has taken notice:

- **Empowerment of individuals and communities:** Digital platforms democratize health insights in unprecedented ways, allowing individuals and communities to play a more prominent role in their own health. For example, two studies in Australia demonstrated improved awareness on how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, and reduced risky behavior following SMS-based outreach.^{i,ii} Additional research has revealed important opportunities for empowerment, from preventing infectious diseases to increasing health behaviors in Vietnam,ⁱⁱⁱ Tanzania and Zambia,^{iv} South Africa and Uganda,^v Kenya,^{vi,vii} Cambodia,^{viii} Peru,^{ix} the United Kingdom,^{x,xi} Canada,^{xi} the United States,^{xii,xiii} and Ecuador.^{xiv}
- **Efficient, high-quality service delivery:** In low-resource settings with health worker shortages and financing challenges, digital platforms can improve health worker productivity, support efficient resource allocation, and standardize aspects of service delivery to ensure quality. In Tanzania, digital, de-duplicated data collection, and automated reporting saves health workers ten hours per month on average—time that they can then spend on clinical care.^{xv} Gains in service delivery efficiency and quality have also occurred in India,^{xvi,xvii,xviii} Bangladesh and Mali,^{xix} the United States,^{xx} the Dominican Republic,^{xxi} China,^{17,xxii} Malawi,^{xxiii} Germany,^{xxiv} and Ghana.^{xxv} We also know that some country governments have saved millions of dollars lost to fraud by digitizing their human resource and financial systems.

Today, digitally enhanced health care is not available for everyone. Worldwide, billions of people struggle to access basic infrastructure necessary to health. Along with roads, water, and electricity, communities are deprived of access to the software and digital content essential to generating health insights and connecting with health providers and medicines. Even when there is Internet connectivity and functioning hardware, overburdened health workers and limited funding all prevent the uptake of digital innovations that have been shown to improve health outcomes. The history of digital health is not just filled with stories of empowerment and efficient, high-quality service delivery; it is also filled with failed pilots, unscalable solutions, and short-lived ideas—which have resulted in skepticism to and resistance against digital health interventions.

Access to digitally enhanced health care will become more important, not less, if we want to sustain the extraordinary gains in health equity we've made since the 1990s. In some communities today, smartphones are tracking critical health metrics for individuals and assisting the matching of individuals to care. Robust information systems are helping health providers customize their care to fit with individual needs and ensuring communities are equipped with the medical professionals and supplies they need. Groundbreaking medical innovations—like cancer treatments tailored to specific genetic profiles—are transforming the way we treat disease. Without concerted efforts to achieve digital equity, the rest of the world will miss out on these offerings and the subsequent gains in quality and length of life. Over time, burden of disease will look very different in communities benefitting from digitally derived insights versus those being excluded from them.

At Digital Square, we aim to close this gap by accelerating the adoption, scale, and delivery of digital health innovations in low-resource settings.

Join us in building a world where a person's ability to thrive is not constrained by where they are born or what resources they have access to.

What is Digital Square?

Digital Square is an online marketplace—or “square”—where global institutions and citizens come together to accelerate the adoption, scale, and delivery of digital health innovations in low-resource settings. We help individuals, communities, and the health providers that serve them learn about high-quality, trustworthy digital health software that is appropriate for low-resource settings. Health system managers and national-level decision-makers can access opportunities to grow their digital skills and strengthen their digital procurement processes through professional networks, workshops, and certification programs. Innovators can access clearly outlined business and technical requirements for under-represented communities—and the financing required to meet those requirements—making it easier to design solutions for low-resource settings. Finally, Digital Square's investors achieve a double-bottom-line on their investment—they give communities accelerated access to digitally enhanced health care ***and*** open new markets for existing software solutions.

How do we do all this? Through our six initiatives we:

- **Support purposeful product and service innovation** that leads to comprehensive software solutions for low-resource contexts.
- **Promote standards, policies, and guidelines (SP&G)** in all Digital Square investments; these SP&G are set forth by the global digital health community, the World Health Organization, and the International Telecommunication Union.
- **Uphold regional and country leadership** by incubating regional professional networks, administering certification and training programs, and increasing the visibility of regional and local leaders.
- **Catalyze country digital transformation**, first by making it easier to access products, people, (best) practices and (helpful) policies and second by working through Digital Square's network of 40 implementing partners, many of whom support national decision-makers in digital transformation efforts.

- **Catalyze health area digital transformation**, first by supporting digital implementations that help control, eliminate, and eradicate diseases that have been prioritized globally (e.g., HIV) and second by partnering closely with investors interested in these high-priority diseases (e.g., US Agency for International Development [USAID]).
- **Constantly gather evidence, learn, and adapt** our operating model to help the global community efficiently coordinate financing and direct investment toward impactful digital health solutions.

Our current work has the potential to reach millions of people in low-resource communities with strong digital health systems. But we are not satisfied with the status quo. We believe that the right market interventions could extend digitally enhanced health care to everyone in low-resource settings, not just those currently covered by development projects.

We are looking for fellow dreamers to join us in our journey to disrupt the status quo. Let's not stop at reaching millions when there are billions deprived of digitally enhanced health care.

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