

## WEBINAR

### THE CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS OF DIGITAL HEALTH IN WEST AFRICA

### Recommendations on the effective establishment of the digital health network



As part of the “les après-midis de la tech” series, **Baobab Institute and Speak Up Africa** organised a second webinar on 20 July.

This webinar follows e-health ecosystem actors from Benin, Mali and Senegal as they join the Africa e-Health Network (ReSA). The second edition of the conference brought together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, to highlight the challenges and impacts of building platforms and networks for digital health.

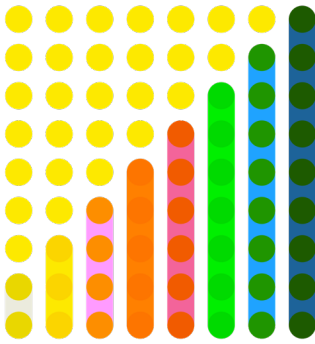
The following experts shared their experience with existing networks to capitalise on the lessons learned for the smooth running of the current network:

- **Mr Ibrahima Gueye**  
Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, AMREF West Africa
- **Mr Pape Gaye**  
Founder of the Baobab Institute
- **Mr Jean Philbert Nsengimana**  
Chief Digital Advisor, Universal Health Coverage Agency (Africa CDC)
- **Ms Aminatou Sar**  
Director of the West Africa Hub and Senegal Office, PATH
- **Mr Oury Bah**  
Technical Program Manager, PATH
- **Mr Bertrand Guillemot**  
ICT4D Partnerships IT4LIFE
- **Ms Carina Ndiaye**  
Strategic Operations Director, Speak Up Africa
- **Mr Omar Mar**  
Digital Transformation Consultant and Expert, Baobab Institute

#### The role of digital health actors is to advance and accelerate progress.

There have been major gains in health in Africa in recent years, but this progress has been slow in coming. Thus, as a community, digital health actors have intellectual resources, technical and financial partners which enable them to revolutionise health on a continental scale. Stakeholders need to come together and pool their efforts and resources to support governments in addressing public health issues.





**It should be noted that several initiatives to federate health actors around digital health platforms, frameworks and other mechanisms have emerged in the last few years. However, despite the interest of stakeholders and members, there are many challenges to the effective establishment and coordination of digital health networks in West Africa.**

## **Following the interventions of the assembled experts, the following major challenges were identified:**

- The need to **develop digital health initiatives and projects** with the agreement of states and/or TFPs;
- The need to **set up a framework for coordination and consultation** on key principles to facilitate the governance of health data.
- The need to **link digital health initiatives and projects** to institutional guidelines and global health policies.
- The need to **develop synergies between key actors** (NGOs, associations, companies, start-ups, etc.) with a functional consultation framework.
- The need to **involve users**, namely patients and care providers, in the development of digital health tools.
- The urgent need to **catch up with the structuring of the digital sector** in West Africa compared to East Africa.
- The need to **correct the significant shortcomings** in terms of technical thinking, scientific studies and digital health development in West Africa.
- The need to **structure the digital sphere** to avoid the proliferation of similar digital health pilot projects across the West African region.
- The imperative to **ensure that public institutions support** digital health interventions.
- The need for **public actors to own the tools** which become inactive at the end of the projects.
- The **transferability of digital solutions** of the different technological tools and devices.
- **Interoperability reflecting the automatic saving of data** in the DHS2 system, and data security.
- The imperative to **build e-health strategies** in each country in line with global health guidelines;
- The need to **build incentive policies and strategies** to support e-health project leaders in collaboration with States, investors and TFPs;
- The urgent need to set the **technical and technological prerequisites** in terms of e-health to guarantee the interoperability of health data.

## En termes de recommandations et de solutions opérationnelles pouvant résoudre les défis liés à la mise en place de Réseaux de e-santé de l'Afrique (ReSAF), et permettant la maximisation de leur impact,

### les participants préconisent :

- The **creation of a structured and formal multisectoral regional network** bringing together a community of practice allowing the pooling of efforts, experiences and resources.
- The **provision of resources to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders** to be more flexible, responsive and scalable to advances in digital and health solutions.
- A better **institutional framing and structuring** of digital health activities in West Africa.
- The establishment of a **participatory and sectoral approach** in the design of digital health solutions through the engagement of various stakeholders, in particular the public and private sector.
- The **alignment of the values and visions** of partners in the digital health community.
- The **sharing of experiences and good practices** in the development of digital health solutions that can benefit other initiatives.
- **Building the leadership capacities of stakeholders** to support the ownership of digital health projects and programmes.
- The **engagement of local civil society Organisations** to support and ensure the sustainability of projects and initiatives.
- The **inclusion of gender** in the technology sector for health.
- The **development and dissemination of communication tools** reporting on health challenges, successes and good practices in Africa.
- The **organisation of face-to-face meetings between actors from e-health platforms and networks**.
- The **capitalisation of lessons learned and good practices from other existing regional networks** in Asia.

After the accession of the Mali Ministry of Health, the Senegal Ministry of Health and Social Action and the Benin Ministry of Digitalisation, the actors taking part in the second webinar, namely Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Path, AMREF and IT4LIFE also committed to take part in the Africa e-Health Network (ReSA).

**As stated during the two webinars, digital can facilitate better access to healthcare and the implementation of UHC, but that is not enough. For it to be a catalyst in the field of health, reforms need to be put in place in the health and education systems, the funding system, the development of adequate health and digital infrastructures, accessibility to all, and the regulatory framework of the different countries in Africa. This requires a multi-sectoral approach from conception to monitoring to ensure that all challenges related to digital health are considered, while taking into account the economic and socio-cultural realities of the continent.**