**Telecommunication
Development Bureau (BDT)**

Geneva, 30 July 2013

Ref:	**BDT/IEE/CYB/DM-343**	Administrations of:
		India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, DP Korea, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Thailand, Maldives

Subject: **Regional Workshop on "National eHealth Strategies for Improving Women's and Children's Health", Bangkok, Thailand, 30 September – 2 October 2013**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Given the critical importance of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health (MDGs 4 and 5), a high-level UN commission to improve global reporting, oversight and accountability for women's and children's health – the **Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health[1]** – was established in January 2011 to increase the likelihood that pledges for women's and children's health are honoured and that resources are spent in the most effective way to save lives. One of the ten recommendations set by the Commission encourages "**Innovation through information and communication technologies (ICT) for accountability**". The World Health Organization and the International Telecommunication Union are partners in supporting this recommendation.

Innovation through ICT is instrumental in improving the performance of health information systems including, for example, facilitating surveillance of maternal and child death, facility reporting, data administration, data sharing and improving civil registration and vital statistics. To ensure, however, that those services reach scale, an enabling environment for eHealth is required, covering policies, governance, human resources and health information standards, which are some of the key challenges towards large-scale use of ICT for health.

The integration of ICT in health systems remains, therefore, a target to be achieved by many countries. Experience has shown that harnessing ICT for health requires commitment and planning at the national level, to make the best use of existing capacity while providing a solid foundation for investment and innovation. A national eHealth strategy can contribute to reaching health and development goals and,

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[1] http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/membernews/2011/20110620_commission_on_accountability/en/

for some countries, will constitute a major step towards implementing recommendations such as those of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health.

With a view to supporting **Innovation through ICT for improving Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health**, ITU, in coordination with WHO, is inviting a representative from your Ministry to a workshop to be held in **Bangkok, Thailand on 30 September – 2 October 2013** to raise awareness about high impact eHealth/mHealth innovation that address women's and children's health, and to develop participants' understanding of how Innovation through ICT can be supported by a national eHealth strategy. The workshop will also include a review of a draft Regional eHealth Strategy developed by WHO's Regional Office for South East Asia (SEARO).

Your country representative should ideally be a senior staff member in charge of information and communication technology for health activities in the Ministry. Information relating to the event is available in the attached Annexes.

A similar invitation has been sent to the Ministry of Health in your country by WHO/SEARO. We anticipate that representatives from both ministries will work jointly towards harnessing ICT for improved Women's and Children's Health.

We would appreciate if you can send us the name of the representative who will participate at the workshop not later than **30 August 2013** by completing the attached registration form at Annex 5 and sending it back scanned and signed to Ms Porntip Modethes, email: porntip.modethes@itu.int with a copy to Mr Sameer Sharma, email: sameer.sharma@itu.int.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Sameer Sharma, email: sameer.sharma@itu.int.

I look forward with great anticipation to your participation in this event.

Brahima Sanou
Director

ANNEX 1

Information on the workshop on "National eHealth Strategies for Improving Women's and Children's Health", Bangkok, Thailand,

30 September – 2 October 2013

The key workshop objective is to bring together stakeholders from ministries of health and ICT, to raise awareness about high impact eHealth/mHealth innovations that address women's and children's health, and to develop participants' understanding of how Innovation through ICT, supported by a national eHealth strategy, can improve Women's and Children's Health to achieve the recommendations of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health.

Specific Objectives

1. Identify and showcase high impact **eHealth/mHealth innovations** that address women's and children's health, and promote their scale up specially in underserved communities;
2. Develop participants' understanding of how to use the WHO/ITU National eHealth Strategy Toolkit and to learn from other countries' experience to help develop well-informed strategies at national level; and
3. Review a proposed "Regional eHealth Strategy" for SEARO countries.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the role of ICT, in delivering effective eHealth/mHealth solutions with a focus on women's and children's health;
- Strengthened human and institutional capacity at the government level to conduct national eHealth strategy development and planning;
- Renewed engagement of national policy makers in exploring means and opportunities for implementing large-scale and sustainable eHealth/mHealth solutions for women's and children's health.

Venue
The event will take place at the Plaza Athenee Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand, commencing at 08:30 hours. Detailed logistics information will be sent to participants in due time.

Language
Discussions will be held in English only.

Contacts

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Fellowships
ITU will provide a limited number of full fellowships to **one participant per eligible country** *and* within the available budget. Eligible countries for fellowships are those that are part of the target countries for the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health namely: **India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, DP Korea and Myanmar**. The participant must be duly authorized by the respective ITU Administration. While the provision of a fellowship is limited to only one participant per country, the number of delegates from a country is not limited provided the expenses are borne by the country. Participants requiring a fellowship are requested to complete the **Fellowship Request Form** in **Annex 4** and return it to the ITU by **e-mail:** bdtfellowships@itu.int **or by** fax to: +41 22 730 5778 by **30 August at the latest.**

Visa
We would remind you that citizens of some countries are required to obtain a visa in order to enter and spend any time in Thailand. The visa must be obtained from the office (embassy or consulate) representing Thailand in your country or, if there is no such office in your country, from the one that is closest to the country of departure.

Annex 2: Background information

ICT and eHealth for improving information and accountability for Women's and Children's Health

The fast approaching 2015 deadline, set by the UN for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, marks the urgency of ensuring that those countries still lagging behind in reaching the goals are being allocated all the resources available and that those resources are being used as fully and efficiently as possible. The workshop will focus on examining the role that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can play in improving transparency and accountability for women's and children's health. When implemented in the framework of a well-coordinated national health strategy, health information technologies become valuable tools for the healthcare system, empowering policymakers, health workers and patients to increase the quality of maternal and child healthcare.

The workshop will provide an overview of the contributions ICTs and eHealth bring to enhance reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child's health in the broad areas covered in the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (CoIA) Recommendations, ranging from birth and death registration to health indicators data collection, and from resource tracking and country compacts to the oversight of results and resources.

WHO/ITU National eHealth Strategy Toolkit

The daily business of health relies on information and communication and, increasingly, on the technologies that enable it, at every level and in every country. This is equally so in delivering care, deploying personnel, managing programmes or conducting research. The World Health Organization and the International Telecommunication Union have produced a National eHealth Strategy Toolkit[2] to help deliver direct national benefits from investments in eHealth. One of the primary objectives of this regional workshop is to enable participants to plan the construction and monitoring of national programmes that will deliver a successful national eHealth strategy based on using the Toolkit.

The workshop will help participants develop their understanding of how to use the WHO/ITU National eHealth Strategy Toolkit to help develop well-informed strategies at a National level. The Toolkit provides a framework and method for the development of a national eHealth vision, an action plan and monitoring framework. It is a resource that can be applied by all governments that are developing or revitalizing a national eHealth strategy, whatever their current level of eHealth advancement. It is a practical, comprehensive, step-by-step guide, directed chiefly towards the most relevant government departments and agencies, particularly ministries of health and ministries of information technology and communications.

Although the Toolkit is comprehensive, it does not need to be comprehensively employed. Individual governments and their departments can tailor it to their own national policies, resources and requirements, and to the expectations of their citizens. They can choose, refine and develop the parts that are best for them and create their own unique eHealth vision. However, all the components of a

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[2] http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/cyb/app/e-health/NeHSToolkit/intro.phtml

well-formed strategy will need to have been considered even if not all will require detailed work in each case.

Before the workshop each delegate is requested to send to the convenor of the workshop a brief statement of:

- 3 major challenges they are faced with in dealing with strategic eHealth issues in their country
- The 3 key eHealth strategy issues they would like to learn how to address by using the Toolkit.

During the workshop, though there is a considerable wealth of detailed advice and guidance contained within the toolkit, the mix of presentation and interactive activities within each session can be adapted to meet the experiences and needs of participants. The refreshment breaks during the day are intended to ensure there are opportunities for informal networking, and there is a final review session of the workshop as a whole. Feedback will be invaluable in progressively improving the workshop material.

After the workshop, participants should leave with a clear sense of what good practice recommends, and what their priorities and next steps will be in establishing national level eHealth strategy development programmes. Securing country-level ownership of these programmes is crucial.

Review of the draft Regional eHealth Strategy developed by WHO/SEARO

Considering the growing importance and potential benefits of eHealth for improving health systems and outcomes in the South-East Asia Region, WHO/SEARO is in the process of developing a Regional eHealth Strategy. It aims to provide a single, harmonized and comprehensive eHealth strategy for the region, setting general direction for next five years and laying the requisite foundations for the future integration and coordination of all eHealth initiatives in the region.

This regional workshop will provide the timely opportunity to present the draft regional strategy, discuss its components with the countries and seek their feedback.