



# **ITU-WHO National eHealth Strategies for Improving Women's and Children's Health Regional Workshop**

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Opening Remarks

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Dr. Yonas Tegegn,  
WHO Representative to Thailand,

**Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

On behalf of the ITU, its Asia-Pacific Regional Office in particular, I would like to thank the Ministry of Public Health, Royal Thai Government, for hosting this important workshop, as well as WHO for the close partnership with ITU to organize this joint workshop on National eHealth Strategies for Improving Women's and Children's Health.

I can't emphasize more on importance of and need for the national strategy on the use of ICT for Health as a whole and for Women's and Children's Health in particular.

This Regional Joint Workshop is part of the close collaboration or partnership between WHO and ITU to support implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (CoIA), which was established in 2011 with co-vice-

chairship of ITU Secretary General and WHO Director General - as a way of improving global reporting, oversight and accountability for women's and children's health, so that resources can be spent in the most effective way to save lives.

As you know, one of the ten recommendations set by the Commission encourages "Innovation through information and communication technologies (ICT) for accountability".

### **Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

In digital or broadband era of convergence, there is no longer one sector existing alone: I.e., ICT can play a critical role bridging Health and ICT sectors beyond.

Indeed, ICT is opening up windows for innovative and creative applications called e-health, especially when there are increasing pressures on various health-related issues and challenges in many countries from aging population, increased rates of chronic disease, to health workforce, which require for high-quality health services more effectively and efficiently using the creative and innovative means of ICT.

Today, we can already experience and benefit from e-health, m-health inter alia, which clearly makes our life not only convenient but also saved !

I am sure that there will be more extraordinary and revolutionary progresses in the years to come.

However, the best ICT applications including the most advanced e-health or m-health need to be part of the comprehensive national strategy.

Recognizing the potential of e-Health, several forward-looking governments have issued nation-wide strategies, set targets, allocated significant resources and established coordination bodies in order to promote widespread use of ICTs in the health sector. Many countries are yet still lagging unfortunately behind.

To achieve significant progress for e-health, there should be multi-stakeholders' engagement or partnership in identifying priorities of e-health solutions and ways of improving everyone's health at large.

For this objective, ITU and WHO are determined to work and partner together to facilitate participatory and inclusive national e-health planning processes, while having jointly published the "National eHealth Strategy Toolkit", which is a comprehensive and practical guide for the governments or any others to customize their own circumstances and goals.

Taking this opportunity, I am also glad to share our recent ITU publication: called - "ICT for improving information and accountability for Women's and Children's Health".

This Report reviews each of the ten CoIA recommendations, which are highlighting the contributions of ICT applications and tracking the fulfillment of the MDGs 4 and 5 in particular.

As for instances among many others:

1. no woman should pass away when giving birth simply because the right information which did not reach her on time, when we can access and use ICT.
2. no epidemiological situation should get out of control because the information was not received early enough, when we have more than 90% of global mobile coverage.
3. all children, regardless of their place of birth and the socioeconomic situation of their parents, should have access to proper healthcare and education because ICT is at our fingertips.

I can go on and on more !

**Dear participants,**

Having said all, I am very pleased to invite you to the Connect Asia-Pacific Summit which will be jointly organized by The Royal Thai Government and ITU in close partnership with various stakeholders including WHO on 18th November 2013 at Bangkok, Thailand, which will be followed by the ITU Telecom World 2013 from 19th to 22nd November.

We are looking forward to welcoming you all and making new initiatives especially on e-health partnering with WHO announced and shared at the Summit, where both WHO and ITU are also working to invite Health Ministers at its Roundtable.

**Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

I am very pleased and excited to see close cross-sectoral partnership between Health and ICT while we do hope to see more ambitious, yet pragmatic, plans on how to better use ICT, its infrastructure and applications, for improving Health of Women and Children that aspire to the expectations of all of us.

During the three days, Mr. Sharma from ITU and Ms. Chikersal from WHO will remain with you throughout the Workshop along with the expert Mr. Peter Drury.

Last but not the least, I do welcome you at this very important and meaningful partnership Workshop as well as the Summit on 18 November 2013 here again at Bangkok, while wishing you all to network each other among participants and share rich experiences from cross-sectors for the very success of this Workshop.

Thank you.