



Side Event Draft Concept Note

TITLE: CONFRONTING THE DISEASES OF POVERTY TO MEET THE MDGs: “DIGITAL HEALTH AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT” INTERACTIVE ROUNDTABLE

Sponsor/Co-Sponsor: United Nations “Health 8” partners including World Health Organization and sister UN agencies including United Nations Office for Partnerships. The Earth Institute at Columbia University, Commonwealth Business Council, African Business Roundtable, International Business Leaders Forum, Business Action for Africa, Oxford Health Alliance, The Rockefeller Foundation.

Date: 22 September 2008

Time: 3.00-6.30pm, with tentative Africa Digital Heal Awards Ceremony 6.30-7.30 pm

Venue: Japan Society, New York

Potential Moderator/Chair, Panelists/Resource persons: Final Moderators and Chairs TBD.

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Context

Africa as a whole is off track to meeting the MDGs on reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating infectious disease (MDGs 4, 5 and 6). Yet, experiences from other continents, as well as recent progress in several countries in the region, prove that the Goals can be achieved across Africa. Nevertheless, support for rapid scale-up of proven interventions as well as critically needed investments in basic healthcare systems remains insufficient. In most African countries the basic health infrastructure, human resources, equipment and supplies are inadequate to provide

essential maternal, child and reproductive health services, and to control and treat infectious diseases. Malaria and other vector-borne diseases that can be controlled and treated continue to take millions of lives throughout Africa and are spreading to more parts of the continent due to rising temperatures caused by climate change.¹

At the midpoint of the Millennium Development Goal project, the year 2008 marks an important milestone for global health, technology and development. The World Health Assembly (May 14-25, Geneva), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development or TICAD IV (May 28-30, Yokohama), the OECD Ministerial on “The Future of the Internet Economy” (June 17-18, Seoul), the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit (July 7-9), the OECD Ministerial on “Aid Effectiveness” (September 2-4, Accra), and the special High Level Events on “African Development Needs” (September 22, New York) and the “Millennium Development Goals” (September 25, New York) at the UN General Assembly, as well as Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health 2008 (Bamako, Nov 17-20) and International Conference on Financing for Development (Doha, Nov 29–2 Dec 2) – all offer a unique opportunity for governments, donors, foundations, business, international organizations and civil society to act now and as one to get the MDGs back on track and craft a coherent and concrete response to health security in the information age.

For the first time in history, the world has the knowledge and the means to address global health issues in ways it has never been prepared to do in the past. New technology has transformed communication and access to information. The ripple and network effects resulting from the convergence of computer, telephone and television have already moved far beyond the generic platform technologies of mobile communications and the internet. They have also led to the rapid acceleration of knowledge and discovery in life science in areas such as genomics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. The coming together of all these related technologies with the health sectors at the nexus of digital health has profound implications for development policy making and resource mobilization.

In addition, the global health landscape is itself unrecognizable from even a decade ago. While the MDGs have revitalized interest in global health issues, the influx of new money and multiple stakeholders has opened the way to innovative structures, networks, partnerships and alliances beyond traditional health and development models. The worldwide response to AIDS is increasingly seen as an exemplar to confront the diseases of poverty and, critically, the impending crises of chronic non-communicable disease and the diseases of climate change. Meanwhile, the nature of the fight against AIDS has also evolved radically in recent years from that of an infectious disease to a chronic long-term illness, and from a core health issue to one of basic economic and social development.

Managing the risks rewards of both technological convergence and the convergence of health and development is increasingly *the* critical challenge facing *all* stakeholders. An unparalleled opportunity exists for governments, donors, foundations, business,

¹ See *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa – Recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group*, June 2008.

international organizations and civil society to act now and as one to craft a coherent and concerted response to health security in the information age. This will begin from the premise that lack of access to health knowledge and to essential medicines, vaccines, and other products is one of the key factors limiting human development. And it implies that every country deserves a robust and responsive health system (this includes a health workforce, infrastructure, and supplies, a health research system, and a health information system) to give all citizens the chance for economic and social empowerment.

United Nations Action Agenda

During the milestone year of 2008, the UN Secretary-General and the relevant UN entities have indicated they will pursue in particular three immediate action items: a) A call for increased and sustained investment to address the crisis of human resources, noting the need for a critical mass of community health workers as an important component of functioning health systems and service delivery at the local level, and advocate for universal social health protection; b) Raise the need to push progress on maternal health at the level of Heads of State and Government through efforts to reduce maternal mortality and ensure universal access to reproductive health, and encourage collection and sex-disaggregation of data on health, including through public-private partnerships; c) Mobilizing action and increased funding to treat and control neglected tropical diseases, including by bolstering drug procurement and scaling up for integrated service delivery at the community level.

Main issues and challenges:

Against this background it clear that a long-term, forward-looking response is required. At a uniquely early stage in the product and service life cycle of digital health, for example, the possibility exists for developed and developing countries alike to:

- **Ensure** the current inequity of the global health and digital divides do not become a digital health divide;
- **Guarantee** that the crises of the global and African decline in health systems and shortfall of skilled health workers are addressed head-on;
- **Realize** universal access and the inter-linked MDG agenda via the strategic and innovative use of science, technology and innovation (STI) and information and communication technologies (ICT) within the 2010 and 2015 timeframes;
- **Confront** new and re-emerging infectious diseases and the developing world pandemic of chronic non-communicable diseases with all available modern means;
- **Define** relevant partnership roles and responsibilities for new and existing players in R&D, and product and service delivery in the increasingly fragmented landscape of global health;
- **Deliver** on the promise of Goal 8 to “Develop a global partnership for development” in cooperation with pharmaceutical and ICT companies.

Possible Questions to guide an interactive discussion:

Some Questions for the Health, Technology and Development Sectors

Health

- *What are the roles and responsibilities of traditional and emerging actors in global health? What constituencies drive demand for technological solutions in the context of development, and how can we remain responsive and current while shaping the agenda? Who will set the new global health agenda?*
- *How do we arrive at a common definition of digital health and how can generic platform technologies enhance health and healthcare value chains by inviting new participants and actors?*
- *How can the promotion of STI and ICT in the health sector improve health outcomes in developing countries? What are some examples of STI and ICT invigorating prevention, addressing the shifting treatment burden, boosting fragile health systems, and confront emerging and epidemic-prone diseases?*
- *How do we transfer the most viable models for using STI and ICT from developing countries to developed countries which are more risk averse?*
- *WHO estimates Africa is short of 1.5 million health workers. What are the impacts of cell phones and laptops in the hands of every health worker have in the formal and informal workforce sectors? How can this be expanded and improved?*
- *How can knowledge and knowledge networks enhance the HIV scorecards, monitoring and evaluation, with better data sets and innovative search capabilities?*
- *How can R&D efforts in overlapping MDG fields be aligned towards common goals without compromising the diversity of approaches? Is a worldwide infrastructure to share and coordinate AIDS and infectious disease or chronic non-communicable disease R&D feasible?*

Technology

- *In what ways has the digital revolution impacted health and development in an affordable, replicable and scalable way? What are the challenges: do problems lie in devices, content, power, training, or institutional? What can healthcare learn from leapfrog ICT in other sectors?*
- *What emerging technologies can scale healthcare to rural and remote areas? How can the diversity of technological solutions currently employed be improved and guided towards developing more cohesive approaches?*
- *With an annual health budget of \$25 per capita in some countries how is digital health already being made relevant and in what ways can we think out of the box*

for more affordable, scalable, and replicable interventions? How should new funds be spent and on what?

- *For every dollar of investment in science and technology, what does the impact on healthcare look like? Is there a threshold that we have to reach? How do we measure impact? How big is the market for digital health in both developed and developing countries? Can emerging science and technology change the pandemic equation?*
- *If STI and ICT fall short of health sector needs, how can national policies and programmes be aligned for mutual investment and innovation?*
- *How can the notion of digital public goods be pursuing beyond the global public goods of knowledge, science and technology transfer and IPR-free drugs?*
- *What is the potential impact of internet-based proposals including those for a Global Health Partnership Centre, a Global Health Exchangeⁱ, and a Global Health Early Warning System?*

Development

- *How can we engage the health, technology and development communities on common goals in order to provide a common language to address challenges and progress?*
- *How can the inter-linked development goals in health, education, enterprise, public administration & environment be leveraged via STI and ICT for pro-poor growth to create new markets? How can ICT bundle health with other services to reduce the overall cost of care?*
- *What is the role of innovative public-private partnerships and market forces in generating local & global responses, and how do these relate to Goal 8 Target 17 & 18?*
- *UNAIDS warns global funds of \$20 billion annually will be needed by 2008 just to combat AIDS. How can innovative funding mechanisms be brought into play such as the new philanthropy, public private partnerships, advanced market commitments, and taxes on goods and services?*
- *Can innovative funding mechanisms translate to the world of digital health?*
- *What space exists for a framework for action to create a development dynamic in digital health?*
- *How can we engage non-traditional partners in the private sector towards meeting these goals*

Expected results

[To be finalized]