

Abstract

Introduction: Adoption of digital technology in healthcare is recognized for its promising potential and the field is progressing rapidly. However, a remarkable discrepancy in the levels of adoption is seen between countries. Therefore, benchmarking can help countries learn from each other. Monitoring can also aid decision making and incite targeted development within a country. This assessment used the Global Digital Health Index and Maturity Model (GDHI) to evaluate eHealth in Sri Lanka.

Methodology: For each GDHI indicator, key resource institutes in Sri Lankan context were identified through a search of literature and key informants. An interviewer administered questionnaire on the relevant indicators was given to selected interviewees representing key resources. This was followed by informant interviews to explore further on the current maturity status of the country based on each indicator. A focus group discussion among a group of informants was conducted to explore how GDHI aligns with Sri Lanka's digitization strategy. Answers from the questionnaires were used to identify country score of each indicator and the interview transcripts were compiled to understand the country status further as well as identify the challenges in applying the index. Nine other countries had participated in global GDHI data collection during this stage. Sri Lanka was benchmarked against a global average of the participatory countries. Through the observations, the maturity status of the country and the challenges in applying GDHI were identified and recommendations formulated.

Results: Sri Lanka's Overall Digital Health maturity phase was identified as 3 out of 5. The country was in Phase 2 for Strategy and Investment, Legislation, policy, and compliance and Standards and Interoperability. Leadership and governance, Infrastructure, and Services and applications were identified as Phase 3. Only Workforce category had a Phase 4 score for Sri Lanka. The country placed equal to benchmark score in Services and applications category and above the benchmark for Workforce category. All other 5 categories were below the benchmark score. A number of challenges were identified by applying GDHI indicators including difficulty obtaining data due to lack of monitoring and evaluation of eHealth activity.

Conclusions: Sri Lanka has made significant progress in digital health however to reach full maturity has a long way to go. Through some minor modifications in the index that can help its application, GDHI can be beneficial to periodically (i.e. - annually) monitor progress of the domain in the country over time.