DIGITAL SELF-CARE
A FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION
BRIEF SUMMARY 2023

SELF-CARE
TRAILBLAZER
GROUP

WHY CREATE THIS TOOL?

The ways in which people engage in self-care are changing. Mobile phones, smart phones, internet access, and artificial intelligence offer the potential to increase health access and facilitate self-care for individuals who may otherwise be subject to stigma or face other barriers to accessing facility-based healthcare. Digital tools can function across a range of self-care behaviours, from increasing self-awareness to facilitating self-screening and treatment. In support of this evolution, the Digital Self-Care Framework offers practical guidance, real-life examples, and case studies to aid those working to improve health and wellbeing through the digitization of self-care.

WHO IS THIS TOOL FOR?

This framework is intended for use by health program implementers, digital health developers, advocates, and policymakers.

WHAT DOES THE FRAMEWORK DO?

The Digital Self-Care Framework provides practical guidance for effectively designing, implementing and researching digital health in support of evidence-based self-care. It maps the common touchpoints of these areas and highlights the considerations and research questions needed to inform policy and implementation in low- and middle-income countries. Using sexual and reproductive health and rights as a lens, the document draws on country and program-specific resources, experiences, and examples to serve as a living blueprint for users.

The framework maps out steps that can maximise the potential of digitally enhanced self-care, drawing from lessons learned and relevant frameworks and principles. It highlights four domains, critical for self-care design and implementation:

User experience: Digital tools should respond to the target users' needs, concerns and perceptions with respect and compassion and include regular review and feedback of user experience.

Privacy and confidentiality: Privacy and security of information, services and data are important for the technical development of digital self-care tools, for ensuring users' privacy and confidentiality; and for improving user's perceptions and comfort with use.

Quality assurance: The quality and safety of digital tools for promoting self-care is directly tied to human rights and safety.

Accountability/ Responsibility: Digital tools must be compliant, and an understanding of the existing regulations, policies and legal provisions is critical.

A checklist is included for each domain, developed to support design implementation and evaluation with a targeted emphasis on informed planning. A roadmap then illustrates the process of developing high quality digital self-care interventions, bringing together the important considerations and key characteristics outlined in the framework.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Key considerations and recommendations are included in a Call to Action which focuses on the path forward for designers, implementers, researchers, policymakers, and donors. These include the need to address existing gaps and barriers to self-care, ensuring safety and quality through monitoring, and the inclusion of self-care in national digital health strategy.

HOW HAS THIS TOOL BEEN USED?

The postnatal period is of critical importance, yet PNC is one of the most underutilized services in Afghanistan – a situation exacerbated by new service interruptions and restrictions on women's movement. To promote postnatal behaviors that can be safely self- or family-led and managed, Jhpiego and Viamo implemented a mobile phone-based solution that uses Interactive Voice Recordings (IVR), delivering compelling, narrative messaging on key health topics to women for the first 6 weeks postpartum. The Mother-Baby Infoline was developed considering the Digital Self-care Framework's characteristics for quality digital self-care interventions. More than 50% of the women participated in an endline survey of this pilot, and most (85%) reported that the Infoline was not difficult to use, two out of three women would recommend it to a friend, and more than 80% found the information useful and were able to implement the recommended self-care actions most of the time (70%).

WHERE CAN I FIND FURTHER INFORMATION?

Digital Self-Care, A Framework for Design, Implementation and Evaluation

ABOUT THE SELF-CARE TRAILBLAZER GROUP AND ITS EVIDENCE AND LEARNING WORKING GROUP

This Digital Self-Care Framework is a product of the Self-Care Trailblazer Group (SCTG), a global coalition that aims to advance evidence-based SRH self-care policies and programs. The SCTG Evidence and Learning Working Group (ELWG) supports this work through the generation and synthesis of strategic evidence and learning products to strengthen the evidence base for SRH self-care programs, policies, and implementation. The Digital Self-Care Framework is one of many resources published by the ELWG to offer practical and theoretical tools to support increased awareness around sexual and reproductive self-care for health officials, health professionals, and researchers.