**Concept Note** for the **Development of a Digital Health Policy in Namibia**

1. **Background**

Namibia faces persistent challenges in delivering equitable, accessible and quality healthcare, particularly to populations in rural and remote regions. With the rise of digital technologies, there is a significant opportunity to transform the country’s health system through the adoption of digital health interventions such as telemedicine, electronic health records (EHRs), Mobile Health Applications (mHealth) and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven diagnostics.

To harness the potential of these innovations effectively, a comprehensive Digital Health Policy is essential. This policy will provide a clear framework for the planning, implementation, regulation and evaluation of digital health initiatives across the country.

#### **Problem Statement**

Namibia is committed to improving health outcomes and achieving universal health coverage. However, the country faces persistent challenges in healthcare access, especially in rural and remote areas. Digital technologies—such as telemedicine, mobile health (mHealth), electronic health records (EHRs), and AI-powered diagnostics—present transformative opportunities to address these challenges.

Despite progress through initiatives like the National E-Health Strategy (2021–2025), Namibia lacks a comprehensive Digital Health Policy to guide implementation, governance and regulation. Developing such a policy is essential for coordinating efforts, protecting patient data, and ensuring equitable, effective use of digital technologies in health.

**2. Purpose**

The purpose of this concept note is to outline the rationale and proposed approach for the development of a national Digital Health Policy that will guide the integration of digital health technologies into Namibia’s health system in a safe, equitable and sustainable manner.

**3. Objectives**

* To conduct scoping study or environmental scanning in the form of SWOT
* To engage stakeholders in shaping a national vision for digital health.
* To develop a policy framework that supports innovation, data governance, and equitable access.
* To align legal and regulatory structures with emerging digital health needs.
* To establish an implementation and monitoring plan for the policy rollout.

**4. Scope**

The Digital Health Policy will cover the following areas:

* Telehealth and Telemedicine
* Electronic Health Records (EHRs)
* Mobile Health (mHealth) applications
* Digital diagnostics and wearables
* Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare
* Health Information Systems (HIS)
* Health data protection, privacy and cybersecurity

**5. Proposed Activities**

1. **Situational Analysis and Legal Review**
   * Assess digital health readiness and infrastructure.
   * Review existing laws and policies, including the Public and Environmental Health Act, E-Governance Policy, Electronic Transactions Act, National E-Health Strategy 2021-2025, Draft Cyber Security, WHO Digital Health Strategy 2020–2025. Health Professional Council Guidelines on Telemedicine and Draft Data Protection Bill.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement**
   * Form a national task force including representatives from MoHSS, CRAN, Offices Ministries Agencies (OMAs), Internet Service Providers, Civil Society, Academia and Development Partners.
3. **Policy Drafting**
   * Define objectives, scope, guiding principles, governance structures and standards.
   * Draft the policy document in alignment with national and international best practices.
4. **Public Consultation**
   * Validate the draft policy through consultations, workshops and public input.
5. **Policy Approval and Implementation Planning**
   * Draft a Digital Health Policy Proposal and seek National Planning Commission endorsement.
   * Finalize the policy and seek Cabinet endorsement.
   * Develop a roadmap for implementation, capacity building, financing and monitoring.

**6. Expected Outcomes**

* A National Digital Health Policy adopted by government.
* Improved access to healthcare through digital platforms.
* Legal and regulatory clarity on digital health practices and data governance.
* Strengthened capacity of health workers and patients in using digital tools.
* Better health system performance and patient outcomes.

**7. Key Stakeholders**

**Lead**

Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS)

**Key Stakeholders :**

* Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN)
* Ministry of ICT
* Office of the Prime Minister
* Health Professional Councils
* Internet Service Providers
* Academic Institutions
* Civil Society and Community Representatives
* Development Partners (e.g., WHO,CDC,ITECH,RKI)

**8. Budget and Funding**

A detailed budget will be developed during the inception phase. Funding is expected through a combination of government allocation and development partner support.

**9. Timeline**

The policy development process is expected to take approximately **6–7 months**, divided into:

* **Months 1–2:** Situational analysis and stakeholder engagement
* **Months 3–4:** Policy drafting
* **Months 5–6:** Validation and finalization
* **Month 7:** Adoption and implementation planning

**10. Conclusion**

The development of a Digital Health Policy is a strategic step toward transforming Namibia’s health system and achieving health equity. With strong political will, stakeholder engagement, and smart investment, Namibia can harness the full potential of digital technologies to improve the lives of its citizens.