

## Participants

This workshop is highly relevant for people involved in research, education and development of e-health in developing regions. It is also relevant to researchers, health professionals, and policy makers involved with issues of global health and Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D).

The workshop will bring together e-health practitioners working with ICT4D questions. Stakeholders from diverse sectors of society will participate, including university, government, industry, and not-for-profit organizations.

## Workshop Output

The workshop will have following benefits to participants:

- 1) To learn from successful e-health projects that proved to be sustainable
- 2) To gain fresh perspectives on different ways of achieving sustainability in e-health projects in developing regions
- 3) To gain new knowledge on setting up an e-health project in developing regions with sustainability in mind
- 4) Networking and meeting place for practitioners working with ICT4D issues
- 5) Exchange of knowledge and information between participants
- 6) Establishing new collaboration and new project ideas for development

Participants will be given possibility to evaluate and give their feedback on the level of accomplishment towards direct and indirect benefits achieved during the workshop.

## Organizers

The workshop is organized by Karolinska University Hospital in collaboration with the Norwegian Centre for Telemedicine / WHO Collaborating Centre for Telemedicine and e-health and Karolinska Institutet, with the support from The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER).

## INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

# e-health in Low Resource Settings: the Path to Sustainability

**30-31 March 2009**  
**Stockholm Sweden**

### Organizers



## Background

Many developing countries are suffering from shortage of qualified health professionals to diagnose, treat and follow up on patients. The situation is especially critical in rural areas of developing regions, where a majority of the poor people is living. Factors such as lack of necessary infrastructure in rural areas limit the opportunities for accessing up-to-date and evidence-based health-related information and makes it difficult to build human capacity and promote exchange of experience between health communities.

Due to lack of access to healthcare information and shortage of qualified healthcare personnel, rural people are often forced to travel far for their healthcare needs. This has financial implications in terms of transportation and consulting costs, not to mention loss of work/pay, and as a result the rural people tend to use this as the last option. This usually means that they do self-medication or that they approach a doctor in acute situations. More dangerous is to use remedies prepared by unauthenticated practitioners.

e-health can be a major contributor to bring about changes in the delivery of healthcare services in developing regions, especially in

poor rural areas. e-health is the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for health. For instance, teleconferencing facilities and establishment of networks between physicians in rural and regional hospitals will contribute to the increase of correct diagnosis and treatment of rural patients, hence decreasing the need for referrals to regional hospitals. By providing remote monitoring, medical professionals can diagnose, follow-up on treatment and rehabilitation of rural patients. ICT infrastructure enables access to global healthcare information and evidence-based knowledge, providing distance learning opportunities for rural communities as well as building local knowledge/capacity. In addition, administration and management of healthcare facilities can be handled more effectively through the use of ICT.

Obviously, benefits are clear for implementing e-health solutions. However, making e-health solutions sustainable is a real challenge – especially in low resource settings. A sustainable e-health solution is the one that uses ICT resources to meet healthcare needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Issues such as end-user acceptance, facilitation and maintenance of communication infrastructure, maintenance and further development of software

and hardware solutions, leveraging easy to use applications based on real end-user needs, payment of license fees, communication costs and others are considered to be the hindrance for sustainability of e-health applications in low resource settings.

Holistic and viable approach on these issues combined with innovative business models must be considered in order to make e-health solutions sustainable. Therefore, it is necessary to provide evidence on sustainable e-health solutions and to facilitate new knowledge on different ways of achieving sustainable e-health solutions in developing regions. Successful examples of e-health projects must be critically evaluated and possible replication opportunities to other regions supported.

## Objectives

The workshop will facilitate constructive discussions on sustainability of e-health proven practices in low resource settings.

The workshop will be focusing on sustainability through three e-health themes:

- 1) Communication of health information, such as statistics, patient information and other medical

information along the healthcare chain (Target groups: patients, health professionals, health authorities, WHO, etc)

- 2) Interactive health services to the general population via ICT to citizens, patients, healthcare professionals and others

- 3) Sustainable communication infrastructure as an enabler for rapidly leveraging mobile e-health services in underserved regions.

## Methodology

The workshop will be a mix of keynote presentations and interactive sessions.

- 1) Presentations on successful e-health projects and case studies that have proved to be sustainable

- 2) Presentations on different ways of implementing sustainable e-health applications in low resource settings

- 3) Group discussions on specific ongoing projects and outlining sustainability challenges and solutions

- 4) Panel discussions on issues of sustainability of e-health applications in low resource settings