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TECH-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS FOR SMART SPENDING

| BACKGROUND

Health financing is one of the building blocks of health systems and digital health technologies are changing the way it operates. The functions of health financing are typically characterised as revenue raising (sources of funds, including government budgets, compulsory or voluntary prepaid insurance schemes, direct out-of-pocket payments by users, and external aid), pooling of funds (the accumulation of prepaid funds on behalf of some or all of the population), and purchasing of services (the payment or allocation of resources to health service providers).

Digital technologies can change the nature of business processes and interactions between actors. They offer efficiencies to streamline processes and reduce fraud, increase revenue collections through mobile wallet applications, for example and can potentially enhance equity by extending access to care through telehealth, for example, if covered by public insurance schemes. Strategic purchasing can utilise health technology assessment (HTA) and availability of data can enable evidence informed decisions. At the individual level, digital technologies for health allows households to better manage their money using technologies. However, there are also risks such as potentially increasing inequities, requirements for large up-front investments, and potential fragmentation. Further data security and interoperability of systems are key concerns. These challenges require innovative solutions that can pave the way for use of digital health technologies for health financing and ensure that financing for health can be sustainable, adequate, fair and efficient.

The key issues will revolve around application of digital health technologies across the functions of health financing (collection, pooling and purchasing). These are:

- Use of AI for audits or fraud, waste and abuse detection in health financing
- Health Technology Assessment (HTA) of innovative health technologies
- Smart payment solutions for health financing for payers and providers
- Efficiencies related to digitalisation of processes

| OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective is to identify how digital health technologies can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of health financing.

- To demonstrate the potential of digital health technologies for health financing through case studies;
- To identify challenges and devise potential solutions to harness these technologies effectively to achieve Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- To identify areas for collaboration across and outside the health sector.

Expected outcomes

- Increased understanding of key issues on the role of health technologies on financing
- Enhanced networks to collaborate on key issues



Panelist

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Dr. Watabe joined the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in May 2023 as a health specialist, focusing on technical assistance and policy-related loan projects in health financing for universal health coverage (UHC), digital health innovations, and climate-health financing. He also manages partnerships with key ADB collaborators, including multi-stakeholder projects, impact investment, and co-financing. Before ADB, Dr. Watabe was a program manager for UHC2030, working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank Group, and OECD, where he handled advocacy, accountability, and knowledge management, including leading events such as the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on UHC. He provided technical advice to the UHC Movement Political Advisory Panel and contributed to WHO's Advance Health Financing courses. His career began as a medical doctor in Japan and public health physician in Vanuatu, followed by work as a health diplomat for Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Watabe holds a medical license (social medicine fellow/trainer), a PhD (Medicine) and Bachelor of Medicine, and an MSc in Health Policy, Planning, and Financing from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the London School of Economics and Political Science, along with an Executive Master in Change from INSEAD.