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"Leveraging Digital and AI Technology for Achieving Universal Health Coverage - Opportunities, Challenges and Policy Implications"

The Future Now
For Children Worldwide.

Medicus Mundi Symposium (Basel, 6. Nov. 2019)
Presentation by Ursula Jasper

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The goal

✳ Achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030

✳ "All people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship."

✳ This includes equity in access, quality of care, and protection from financial hardship

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The opportunity

✳Rapid growth of digital health technologies is creating unprecedented opportunities for health.

✳Estimates by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU): over 40% of the young people living in Africa are already connected to the internet.

✳Within the next decade another 300 million people in Africa are expected to get access to the mobile internet infrastructure.

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The means

* design AI and digital-based programs which strengthen not only the quality, consistency, and reliability of single interventions and applications, but enable the transformation of community health systems

Project Location- Kibaha district

Population: > 200,000
Health facilities:46
CHWs: 231
ADDO: 180

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The challenge

✳ Lack of standardized decision making process for management and referral

✳ Referrals are captured but hard to track on paper

✳ Delays in accessing treatment

✳ Lack of timely data for decision making

✳ Absence of a unique ID to reliably identify clients

Problem: CHW-ADDO-Health Facility Linkage

Health Facilities

Community Health Workers (CHWs)

Accredited Drug Dispensing Outlets (ADDOs)

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Approach

* Design and deploy a digital system, which integrates biometrics, electronic medical dossiers, decision-support, referral coordination, and data dashboards, to support health workers across public and private sectors

Goal

* Digitally-enabled health system which improves decision-making, referral coordination and identification, while ultimately saving lives and increasing health and wellbeing for children, adolescents, and their families

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Challenges, problems and warnings

* technology is not always the solution

* better understanding of local needs and (cultural, economic, political, technological) environments necessary

* integration of new tools into existing healthcare systems

* focus on health system strengthening rather than single vertical interventions

* aiming for (market) maturity, scale and (financial) sustainability

* generate evidence for rigorous evaluation

* develop local, non-discriminatory datasets

* assure data protection, safety and informational self-determination

* overarching goal: facilitate access to treatment

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Policy implications

* in many states: insufficient data policy frameworks and legislation

* lack of alignment of privacy, data security, scientific and business interests

* a global health data governance architecture could facilitate the evolution of a health data ecosystem

* vision: health data as a global public good?

* efforts beyond the national level are necessary (UN, WHO, OECD, ITU etc)

* assistance for states in developing sets of rules and laws

* standardized assessments of tools and applications and development of guidelines and global norms
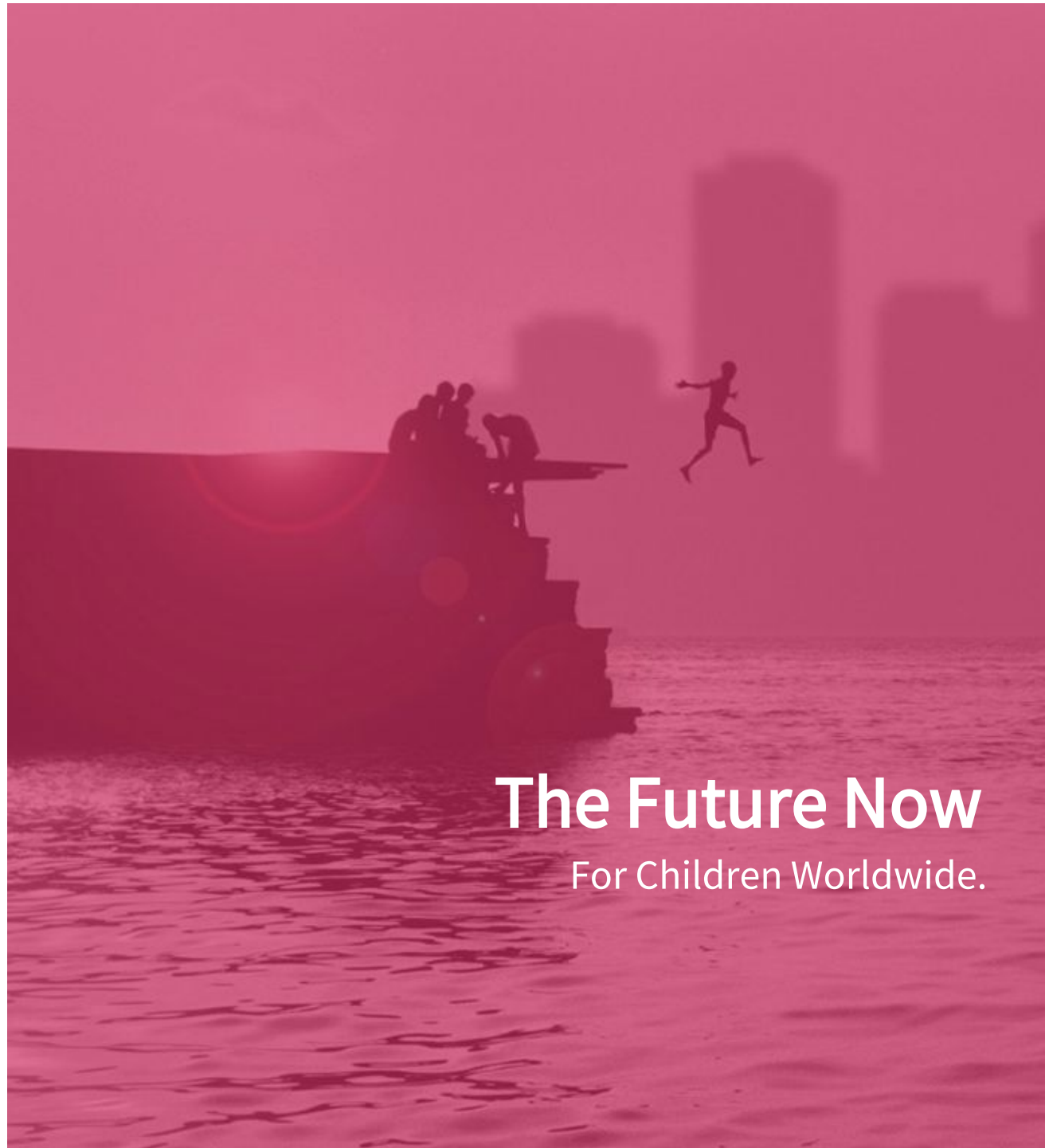
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Conclusion

* advances in AI and digital health together with the fast uptake of ICTs in LMICs fundamentally change current approaches to health

* concerns remain with regard to data protection, fairness, co-creation, sustainability and significant challenges and problems need to be addressed on national levels but also globally

* however: if we manage to leverage AI and digital technologies more comprehensively and responsibly and in an integrated manner, we can make significant progress towards achieving the goal of universal health coverage, as envisioned in the UN Sustainable Development Goals

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