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WHO and Singapore's Temasek launch Digital Health Wallet initiative for ASEAN

March 25, 2026 | News

A new three-year initiative to help Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) transition from paper-based health records to secure, interoperable digital health wallets (DHWs)



The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, in partnership with the Temasek Foundation, have launched a new three-year initiative to help Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) transition from paper-based health records to secure, interoperable digital health wallets (DHWs). The programme aims to strengthen national health systems, improve continuity of care and ensure individuals have trusted, portable access to their essential health information.

“The COVID-19 pandemic showed how important it is for health records to be trusted, verifiable and able to travel with people across borders,” said Mr Kee Kirk Chuen, Head of Health & Well-being at the Temasek Foundation. “Through our partnership with WHO, the Temasek Foundation hopes to support countries in moving from fragmented paper records to secure Digital Health Wallets that individuals can carry with them wherever they go. By testing this approach in pilot ASEAN Member States we aim to demonstrate how trusted digital tools can strengthen health systems, improve continuity of care – including for families and children – and build the local capabilities needed for governments to scale these systems nationally. If successful, this effort can help turn global digital health standards into practical solutions that benefit communities across the region.”

The initiative builds on lessons from the COVIDâ??19 pandemic, which demonstrated the urgency of reliable, verifiable digital health documentation. It also aligns with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2025), which call for globally recognized digital health certificates. The move from paper-based tools – such as the traditional “Yellow Card” or child health booklets – to digital wallets will help reduce administrative gaps, prevent the use of forged documents and ensure that people’s records follow them across borders and between providers. Digital health wallets supported through this initiative will use cryptographic verification via WHO’s Global Digital Health Certification Network (GDHCN), ensuring records are secure, trustworthy and interoperable. Countries will begin with digital International Certificates of Vaccination or Prophylaxis before expanding to routine immunization, maternal and child health records and, eventually, broader personal health summaries.

“Digital health wallets are more than a technological upgrade – they are a commitment to building trusted, people-centred health systems,” said Dr Alain Labrique, Director of the Data, Digital Health, Analytics and AI Department at WHO. “By supporting countries in adopting secure, interoperable solutions, we ensure that individuals can carry their essential health

information with confidence and dignity. This partnership reflects our shared belief that digital transformation must strengthen national capacity, uphold equity, and provide the foundation for resilient health systems."

The programme takes a comprehensive approach, strengthening national systems through technical guidance, shared digital public infrastructure, capacity building and targeted implementation support. Countries will receive assistance to assess readiness, plan deployment, and integrate new wallet functionalities into national health information systems. A key component is the adoption of global interoperability standards, including HL7 FHIR® and the International Patient Summary, helping ensure that data can move safely and consistently across systems. Pilot activities will generate practical insights into how DHWs can improve service delivery, including for mothers, children and travellers in ASEAN member states. Each engaged country will also conduct policy and implementation research, building national capacity and supporting wider regional learning.

"Digital health interventions only become solutions when successfully integrated into existing health systems based on a nuanced understanding of local realities," said Dr Kumanan Rasanathan, Executive Director, Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research. "The Alliance is delighted to support digital health wallets by facilitating learning across the partner countries to inform implementation in each specific context."

By the end of the programme, the DHWs will have been piloted in each country and the results documented as a replicable model for other countries in the region.

The initiative will also produce global guidance to help other countries adopt secure, standards-based digital health wallets, contributing to stronger, more resilient health systems across the region and beyond.