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### **Improving mental health care for young adults in Badakshan Province of Afghanistan using eHealth**

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The purpose of this study is to develop simple and cost effective eHealth solutions for young adults 18-25 years in Badakshan province of Afghanistan, suffering from extreme mental illness, which aims to reduce stigma against mental health in the community, build capacity of health providers, ensure standardized care and improve referral system. The project uses a mix of traditional and technology innovations, including town hall meetings with community, SMS messages to young adults, and a highly robust mobile application empowering the frontline health workers by providing decision support system, building capacity of health providers through blended learning, and providing virtual tele-consultations for service delivery. To-date over 11,000 awareness messages have been sent to 1,400 registered adolescents. Mental health mobile application has been used by 200 health workers to perform 3,000 screenings and 570 referrals, whereas 51 awareness sessions for community and 49 blended learning sessions for health providers have been attended by 8,006 community members and 596 health providers respectively. Telemedicine application has resulted in 18 tele-consultations so far. While recent mid-term evaluation has generated evidence on how eHealth enhanced access to care for remote communities, decreased the stigma, and improved quality of health services by providing opportunities for continuing learning. These low-cost and simple eHealth solutions have shown to benefit health practitioners and the communities in the remote areas of Afghanistan.

#### **Biography**

Shariq Khoja is a seasoned researcher and high profile leader in the area of eHealth and eLearning. He has experience of over 15 years leading Health systems initiatives which focus on evidence and policies towards implementation of eHealth in developing countries. He is also an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Calgary and has written over 50 papers and several book chapters, along with developing tools for organizational needs and readiness assessment, and evaluation of eHealth initiatives. He currently leads eHealth initiatives in South and Central Asia and East Africa.

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