In low- and middle-income countries, where health systems are centralized (care provision is focused in urban areas) and fragmented (providers of health care largely work independently with weak quality assurance and improvement standards), much of the population lacks access to high quality, affordable health care. Development programs have tried to bridge the health gap, often with the use of technology, but have been criticized for their focus on short term vertical programs rather than longer term capacity building. In order to create sustainable change in developing countries, technology innovation by itself is not enough. The problem is not only one of a lack of technical solutions but also insufficient support for local leadership, and underdevelopment of networks and business model innovations necessary to propagate and sustain value creation.

Sana is a volunteer group of engineers, doctors, social entrepreneurs and public health experts focused on improving the quality of health care in developing countries through leveraging innovations in wireless technology. Its approach is interdisciplinary and collaborative: encouraging local leaders to develop solutions enabled by the Sana platform, an open source customizable medical records system for Android mobile phones. The goal of Sana is to strengthen health care systems by using innovation to maximize the effectiveness of existing resources and to foster sustainable change through a focus on capacity building and cooperation. The approach enables technical innovation (based on the open source Sana platform), business model innovation (based on models being developed and tested with our partner organizations) and the development of value creating networks (building coalitions of local and international academic and provider organizations to identify and share examples of best practice and pool resources).

The Sana open-source software platform enables smart phones or tablet devices running Google’s Android operating system to be used to:

- Input patient histories (based on best practice algorithms),
- Input multimedia information (including pictures and video),
- Integrate with Point of Care diagnostic devices (EKG, Ultrasound, electronic stethoscopes and clinical chemistry)
- Integrate this data to any electronic medical record database.

The Sana mission is intentionally aligned to Millennium Development Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. Specifically the organization came into being to “make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications” through partnership. Pilot projects have shown that the Sana approach works. The organisation believes that current initiatives can be scaled to achieve its vision of strengthening health systems through a multidisciplinary collaborative use of wireless technology. As more people adopt and develop the open source Sana platform and share their experiences with each other, a virtuous cycle of collaboration and growth can be established that will positively impact health outcomes even within existing resource constraints.