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Nicky Mostert
Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa

The 2020/2021 edition of the HELINA (HEaLth INformatics in Africa) conference was held from 18 – 22 October 2021 as a blended virtual and in-person conference in Kampala, Uganda due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference was hosted by the Uganda Health Informatics Association (UgHIA) in partnership with the Makerere University, School of Public Health, the Ministry of Health (MOH), Uganda and HELINA.

The conference theme focused on "**Leveraging digital health for public health emergencies within routine care in Low- and Middle-Income Countries**" and was inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim was to provide a platform to showcase interventions in the following areas:

- Digital health initiatives and implementations for public health emergencies, clinical care and surveillance;
- Maturity models, approaches and assessment tools for digital health evaluation;
- Community-level digital health solutions in public health emergencies;
- Health information exchange: Open standards, interoperability, data privacy and security, ethical considerations, policy & governance issues including legal and regulatory;
- Open Source Software in healthcare delivery, surveillance and public health emergencies;
- eLearning and digital health training for capacity building;
- Innovations for remote patient monitoring and care (Telemedicine); and
- Data science: big data and analytics in healthcare, surveillance and public health emergencies.

Review Process

The organizers of the conference invited original submissions in the following categories: full research papers; work in progress papers; or case study/experience presentations. A total of 44 submissions in these categories were received. A double blind peer review process was used for evaluating each full research and work in progress paper. These submissions were anonymized before being submitted to reviewers according to their area of expertise. The Scientific Programme Committee based their final decision on the acceptance of each submission on the recommendations and comments from reviewers. Accepted submissions were then sent back to the authors for revision according to the reviewers' comments. This review process resulted in the following acceptance rates:

Full research papers: 43% acceptance rate (14 received, 6 accepted)
Work in progress papers: 80% acceptance rate (5 received, 4 accepted)
Case studies and experience papers: 88% acceptance rate (25 received, 22 accepted)

In order to be included in the conference proceedings, an accepted paper had to be presented at the conference, either virtually or in person. Authors also had to submit their final camera-ready papers after incorporating reviewer comments in order to be included in the proceedings. Unfortunately, only 5 of the 6 accepted full research papers, and 20 of the work in progress-/cases study-/experience papers were received and included in these proceedings.

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Nicky Mostert
HELINA 2021 SPC Chair
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