

HASH Newsletter



Welcome to the first issue of the HASH e-newsletter.

The Hub for Artificial Intelligence in Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health in Sub-Saharan Africa (HASH) is a project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) as part of the Artificial Intelligence for Development in Africa Program (AI4D Africa). It is being implemented through a multi-disciplinary consortium comprised of: The Academy for Health Innovation Uganda (at the Infectious Diseases Institute), Sunbird AI and the Makerere University AI lab.

HASH is establishing a network of Pan-African Anglophone and Francophone researchers, organizations, innovators and other stakeholders, working to enhance the use of AI and data technologies for MSRH, with a focus on ethical AI development. In addition, the hub will support up to eight innovators to research and validate their ideas in key thematic areas of Maternal Health, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV.



Consortium Leading Partners

The Consortium is comprised of a very dynamic team of three partners that has varied experience in innovative research, project planning and implementation. The Academy team at the Infectious Diseases Institute will lead project planning, research, communication and implementation activities, supported by the Consortium PIs in Sunbird AI and Makerere AI Lab. Sunbird AI and Makerere AI Lab will provide overall expert guidance in areas pertaining to data science and AI methods and application.

The three consortium leads are:

Prof. Engineer Bainomugisha is an Associate Professor and Chair of Computer Science at Makerere University. He currently leads innovative research initiatives that aim to create and apply computational methods and tools to address prevailing world challenges. He has pioneered and leads several research initiatives including AirQo, Crane Cloud and COAST.

Dr Rosalind Parkes Ratanshi is the founding Director and Head of Research and Development at The Ugandan Academy for Health Innovations, based at Infectious Diseases Institute, Makerere University, Uganda. She is also a Principal Research Associate at University of Cambridge, UK.

Dr Ernest Mwebaze, who is founding director of Sunbird AI, possesses over 10 years of teaching experience in computer science and machine learning. While at Makerere University he co-founded the Makerere University Artificial Intelligence research lab leading it to prominence in the field of practical implementation and deployment of artificial intelligence solutions.

These consortium leads are supported by a Management committee through a comprehensive, evidence-based and current approach to the four themes Maternal health, STIs and Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV in all project activities.

Management Committee Members

<https://hash.theacademy.co.ug/index.php/about-hash/>

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Background/relevance of AI

The growing adoption of digital health technologies in Africa is contributing to the increase in the health datasets. This provides an opportunity for data driven strategies and innovations that require specialized expertise and research capacity in new digital technologies such as AI and data science. This research Hub will focus on harnessing this opportunity by establishing a critical Network of enthusiasts, researchers and organizations working in the AI for MRSH space. The Hub aims to gain insight into the usage of new and existing data and how AI and data technology can be leveraged to solve African health challenges and increase impact in the four key areas of Maternal Health, Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health, HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections.



Expectations from the Hub: what to look out for

As a potential member of the Hub, you should expect the project to support you in mentorship and capacity building for responsible AI development, research, dissemination and deployment. The project will also provide funding through a competitive Request for Applications and where possible, support the winning sub-awardees to obtain further financial support at the end of the HASH grant cycle. Identifying, validating and documenting priority research sub-themes at the intersections of AI and maternal, sexual, and reproductive health and rights, and health systems strengthening in SSA. This will be achieved through the responsible development and deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovations. Ethical, inclusive, rights respecting and sustainable AI, gender equality and inclusion are crosscutting principles of the Hub.

Apply for funding from the HASH project]

One of the main goals of the HASH project, is to increase the number of homegrown AI applications to improve Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health and rights in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). As part of this goal, we will run a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) to attract and fund great ideas from all over Sub-Saharan Africa. These ideas will present AI solutions to challenges in MSRSH on the continent. We are very excited about this part of the project, as we have firm belief in the potential that exists when local solutions are built for local problems.

The successful applicants will receive research funding to validate their ideas and we will provide additional support in the form of capacity building and mentorship. The RFA will be based on four themes; Maternal Health, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV.

Look out for more information on our website in early June 2022 regarding the launch of this RFA and how you and your team can join the Hub as a sub-awardee. We would love to have you on board!

Would you like to contact us?

Website link: <https://hash.theacademy.co.ug/>

Email: hashproject@idi.co.ug

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