



EQUITABLE AI COMMUNITY



The Equitable AI Newsletter

September 2023

UP NEXT: Our Final Event on Collective Action, Collective Learning, and Next Steps

COLLECTIVE LEARNING, ACTION, AND NEXT STEPS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 | 10:00 - 11:00 AM ET

Don't miss it! Register for our final Community of Practice (CoP) webinar on **Collective Learning, Collective Action, and Next Steps in Gender Equitable AI**, Wednesday, September 27th from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. EDT! Featured speakers will provide cumulative insights on best practices to advance gender equitable AI.

[Register here](#)

Recently: Equitable AI Core Working Group Discusses Representation

On Wednesday, August 30th, the Equitable AI Community of Practice hosted its fifth webinar workshop focusing on gender representation in AI.

A brief keynote by Jamille Bigio, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at USAID, led into the webinar's first panel, moderated by USAID Gender & AI Fellow Genevieve Smith. Esteemed panelists Catherine D'Ignazio, Director of the [Data + Feminism Lab](#) at MIT, and Tina Park, Head of Inclusive Research & Design at the [Partnership on AI](#), discussed critical representation issues including the "privilege hazard" and the problem of dominant identities shaping AI technologies. D'Ignazio and Park emphasized the importance of consent in data representation and avoiding unnecessary or extractive data collection. Broadly, the discussion emphasized that emerging technologies should only be employed when they are effectively communicated with vulnerable communities and well-suited to combat their unique problems. Further, advancing representation and equity in AI will necessitate providing tools and resources to support data activism in low-resource communities.

Following the panel, the workshop featured grant recipients of the USAID [Equitable AI Challenge](#). Paolina Medina, Assistant Professor of Finance at the University of

Houston, presented her co-authored research on the relevance of gender in credit scoring. Medina noted that women are often left out of credit scoring algorithms and less likely to have access to long-term credit, an issue requiring remediation through development and design. Additionally, Seth Goodman, Research Scientist and Data Engineer for [AidData](#), and Mavis Zupork Dome, Research Analyst and Coordinator, [Ghana Center for Democratic Development \(CDD-Ghana\)](#), presented their findings on AI gender bias in poverty estimates. Goodman and Zupork Dome shared how existing data models revealed pre-existing gender bias in poverty data influences AI poverty estimates, a finding that must be taken into consideration when allocating resources to address and alleviate poverty.

Following the panel and presentations, participants discussed practical strategies for increasing representation and inclusivity in AI. Participants voiced their personal experiences with biased data collection, particularly noting that the environment in which people are interviewed can influence their answers in data collection. Additionally, they reflected on how the culture of tech startups often clashes with the social impact that they ought to strive for. Finally, participants stressed the importance of local community engagement in developing and employing AI. Participants highlighted how forming deep, long-term connections with local communities is the best way to ensure that technologies are effectively employed to solve unique challenges.

[Watch here](#)

LinkedIn Community

Looking to connect, collaborate, or confer with other practitioners in the equitable AI space? Join the conversation in our Community of Practice LinkedIn group below! Discussion, questions, and sharing your work are highly encouraged.

Join the Conversation on LinkedIn

Featured Read: USAID's Equitable AI Challenge in Action



Caption: Angie, a local arepa maker in Boyacá Province, Colombia uses a mobile application to help digitize and accelerate her business / Hanz Ripp

How A New Artificial Intelligence Investor Guide Can Help Financial Tech Companies Eliminate Gender Bias in their Algorithms

Innovative financial technology companies or “fintechs” provide some hope for addressing long-standing biases in the financial industry. Still, many of these early-stage companies depend on impact investors—key stakeholders who impact the trajectory of how the financial industry designs AI-powered financial services for vulnerable populations.

Despite their potential to influence how AI systems are created and deployed, impact investors may not have the expertise or tools to assess how their investments are accounting for potential algorithmic biases. Recognizing this gap, the Center for Financial Inclusion, in partnership with USAID and DAI’s Digital Frontiers under the Equitable AI Challenge, crafted a guide to support impact investors in better understanding and assessing their fintech investees to ensure they prioritize equitable AI.

[Learn more](#)

Critical Resources

Watch & Discover

Gender Equality Collective Action Toolbox - *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

This comprehensive toolbox provides tips and tools to understand, support, and enable collective action - the act of joining in solidarity to advance change - in gender equality efforts.

AI for Good: Designing an Equitable Future - *NYU*, March 2021

The John Brademas Center and NYU Tandon co-hosted a conversation focused on the broader impact of AI on society.

Must-See Articles

Against Scale: Provocations and Resistances to Scale Thinking - Alex Hanna, Tina M. Park, *Proceedings of CSCW '20: Reconsidering Scale and Scaling in CSCW Research*, October 2020

Authors Alex Hanna and Tina M. Park draw on recent work on mutual aid networks and propose questions to ask of collaborative work systems as a means to evaluate technological solutions and guide designers in identifying sites of resistance to scale thinking.

UNESCO launches Women4Ethical AI expert platform to advance gender equality – UNESCO, April 2023

This article reports on UNESCO's creation of the Women4EthicalAI expert platform, a collaborative platform that aims to ensure equal representation in AI use, development, and regulation.

Technology and Gender Equality: bringing women and girls to the center of innovation - UN Women, March 2023

UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous explains how women make up a small percentage of STEM and AI graduates, suggesting that the future of technology may be unequal.

Rules to keep AI in check: nations carve different paths for tech regulation - Nature, August 2023

Writer Matthew Huston provides a review of how China, the European Union, and the United States are regulating AI. In comparing their methods of AI regulation, Huston provides insight on best practices for AI governance.

Suggested Long Reads

Draft Manuscript: Counting Femicide - Catherine D'Ignazio, MIT Press, April 2024

Speaker from August's core working group session, Catherine D'Ignazio, writes why grassroots data activists in Latin America count femicide—and how this vital social justice work challenges mainstream data science.

Everyday Adventures with Unruly Data - Melanie Feinberg, MIT Press, October 2022

Author Melanie Feinberg explicates fundamental concepts of data that reveal the many tiny design decisions—which may not even seem like design at all—that shape how data comes to be. Through the themes of serendipity, objectivity, equivalence, interoperability, taxonomy, labels, and locality, she illuminates the surprisingly pervasive role of data in our daily thoughts and lives.

Making AI Inclusive: 4 Guiding Principles for Ethical Engagement - Tina M. Park, Partnership on AI, July 2022

This white paper examines how to integrate a wider range of insights and experiences into AI/ML technologies, including those of both users and the people impacted (either directly or indirectly) by these technologies.

Gender Equality and the Environment in Digital Economies – Valentine Goddard, AI Impact Alliance, May 2023

This paper was prepared to inform the United Nations' 8th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. The paper explores the intersection of gender equality, AI systems, and climate management to provide eleven policy recommendations.

Data on Gender-Equitable Healthcare Accessibility in Northern Nigeria - Chika Yinka-Banjo, Mary Akinyemi, Olasupo O. Ajayi, and David Tresner-Kirsch, Social Science Research Network, August 2023

This work, coauthored by Equitable AI Challenge grantees and September workshop speakers Chika Yinka-Banjo and Mary Akinyemi, seeks to gather data to

assess the level of healthcare accessibility from a gender-based perspective in northern Nigeria.

Gender, Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence - UNIDO, June 2023

This comprehensive report reviews over 150 initiatives across five geographical regions to recommend priorities and entry points for advancing gender equality and women empowerment in AI and digital transformation.

Funding Announcements

Limited Submission Funding Opportunity: NSF National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Research Institutes

This program is a multisector effort led by the National Science Foundation, in partnership with the Simons Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Department of Defense Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Capital One Financial Corporation, and Intel Corporation. This program solicitation expands the nationwide network of AI Research Institutes with new funding opportunities over the next two years.

Upcoming Events/Opportunities

- **The AI Conference 2023: Shaping the Future of AI** - September 26-27, 2023; *San Francisco, California, United States*
- **Internet Governance Forum Annual Meeting** - October 8-12, 2023; *Kyoto, Japan*
- **Equity and Access in Algorithms, Mechanisms, and Optimization Conference** - October 30-November 1, 2023; *Boston, Massachusetts, United States*
- **Women in Tech Global Conference** - April 23-25, 2024; *United States and European locations TBD, Virtual*

- **Global Digital Health Forum** - December 4-6, 2023, *Hybrid Event – Virtual (Asia and East Africa time zones) & In-Person in Washington D.C.*

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