The Equitable AI Newsletter

October 2023

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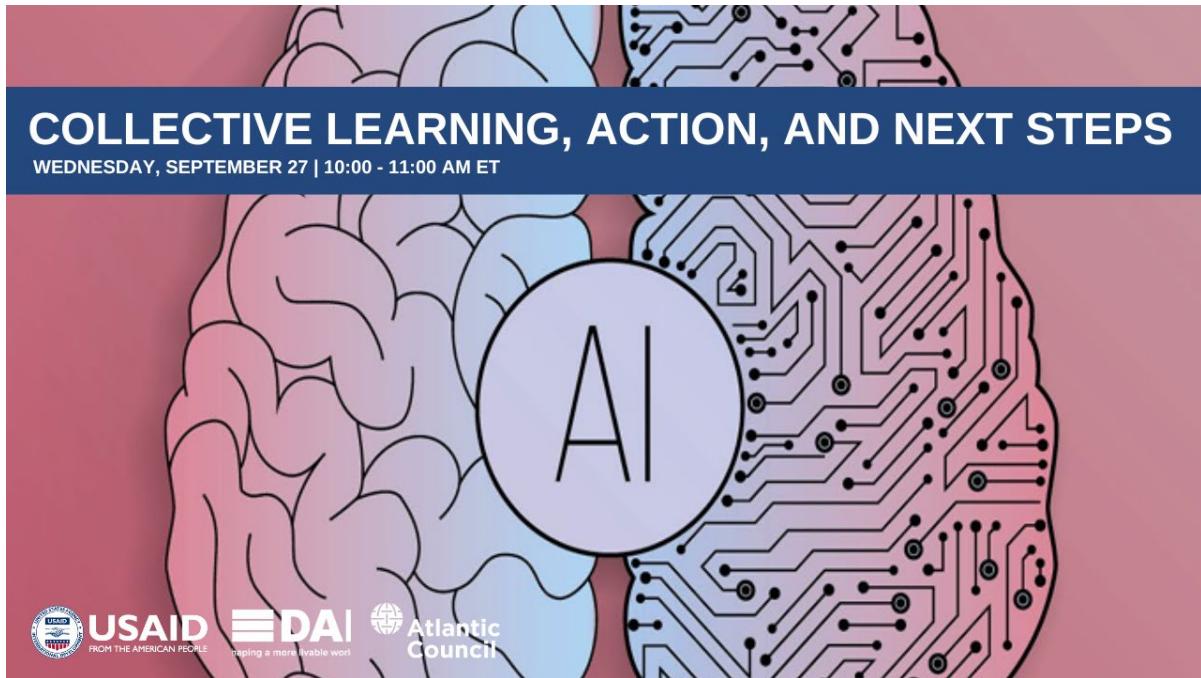
Recently: Our Final Event on Collective Action, Collective Learning, and Next Steps

On Wednesday, September 27th, the Equitable AI Community of Practice hosted our final webinar focused on sharing collective learning on gender representation in AI. The community doesn't end here though, be sure to follow along with future developments and resources via the community group on LinkedIn.

Part I: A Brief Retrospective with Chris Burns, USAID

For the final session, Chris Burns, the Chief Digital Development Officer and Director for the Technology Division within the Innovation, Technology, and Research (ITR) Hub at USAID, opened the webinar with a brief retrospective. Highlights from Chris' remarks include:

- Burns shared USAID's long history of addressing gender inequities, their commitment to embracing the opportunity that AI offers for international development, and the importance of creating thriving communities for dialogue about inequity in AI.

He explained how USAID's work on understanding and advancing Responsible AI started back in 2017 to address how these tools could disproportionately affect women and gender minorities in USAID's partner countries.
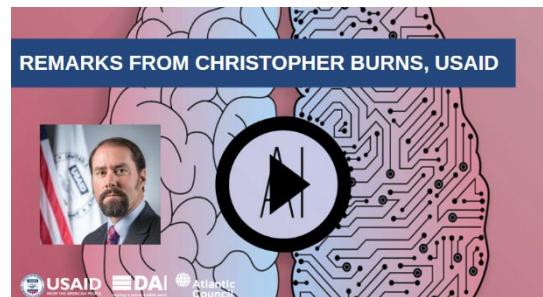
- He shared how the origins of the Equitable AI Challenge arose as an idea shared by a handful of people with their ear close to the ground who knew

the rapid adoption and mainstream use of AI would soon have major consequences in the Agency's work.

"The origin of the Equitable AI Challenge in 2021 is even more humble, as it started as nothing more than an idea shared by a handful of people with their ears close to the ground — who knew the rapid adoption and mainstream use of AI would soon have major consequences in the work we do as an Agency."
- Christopher Burns, USAID
View the soundbite here on LinkedIn.

Part II: Collective Learnings from the Equitable AI Challenge

The opening remarks led into a presentation on collective learnings from the USAID Equitable AI Challenge by USAID Gender & AI Fellow Genevieve Smith. The presentation focused on:

- The meaning of equitable AI and how the USAID equitable AI projects advanced equitable AI
- Challenges faced by grantees in pursuit of equitable AI and lessons learned
- Good practices for equitable AI that could be applied broadly & the roles of different stakeholders for pursuit of equitable AI

To reflect on some of the challenges and lessons learned, Smith was joined by Co-Founder of Women in Digital Transformation Kate Gromova and Founder & CEO of PIT Policy Lab Cristina Martinez Pinto to discuss their project using AI to reduce school dropouts in Mexico. One of their key lessons was the importance of ensuring early and consistent engagement of stakeholders – including teachers and parents – throughout AI development and use. Their Ethical AI Checklist includes guidance on incorporating multi-stakeholder approaches during an activity design.

Following the presentation, University of Lagos lecturer Mary Akinyemi discussed

her team's project, partnering with Nivi, to support gender-equitable <u>access to healthcare</u> through an AI-powered chatbot in Northern Nigeria. She discussed how AI can be used to understand symptoms and how medical AI can be made accessible to people who speak low-resource languages.

Part III: Fireside Chat with Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, Founder and CEO of Women at the Table

The final portion of the webinar was a <u>fireside chat</u> with Founder and CEO of <u>Women at the Table</u> Caitlin Kraft-Buchman and USAID's Emerging Technologies Team Lead Shachee Doshi. Highlights included:

- Kraft-Buchman spoke about the importance of taking a clearly defined "human rights approach" to gender transformative AI. She discussed how thoughtful creation of "proof of concepts" is necessary for inclusive AI. <u>View the soundbite on LinkedIn here</u>.
- Doshi explored the difference between evaluating the impact of AI as compared to the excitement of the innovation. Moreover, Doshi discussed the importance of locally-led AI projects, as well as the importance of long-term support and coordination for inclusive models.
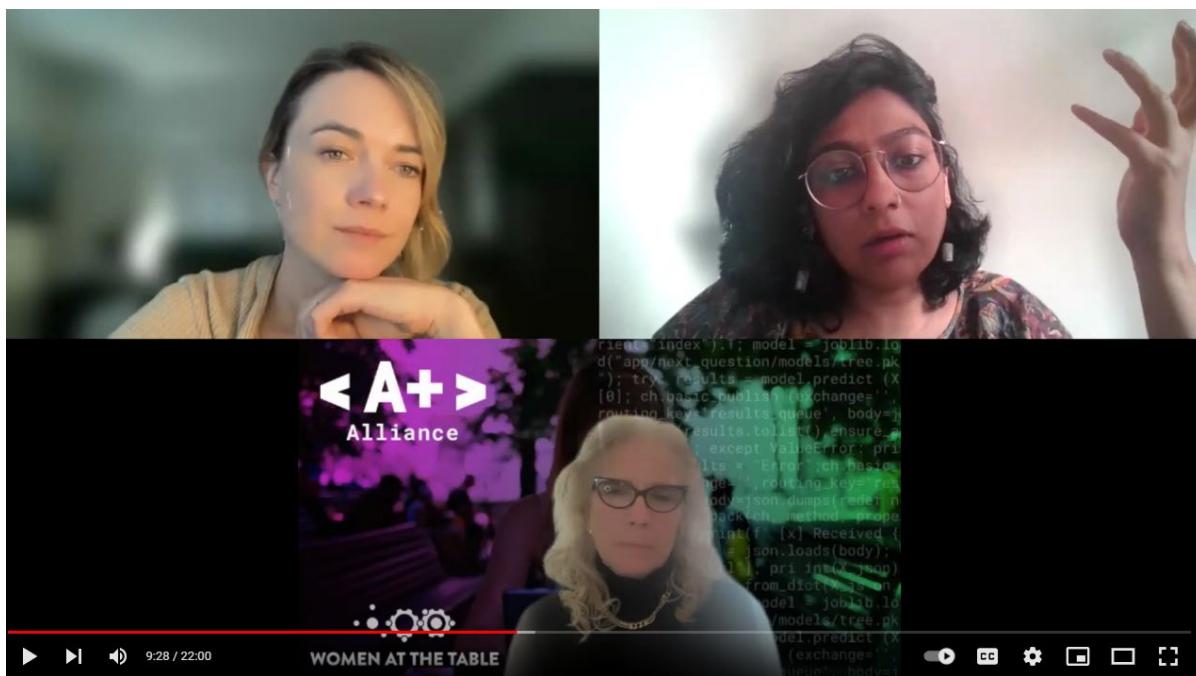
"Where is AI headed? I am optimistic…. and we can't miss this critical moment."

-Shachee Doshi, USAID

View the soundbite here on LinkedIn.

The workshop concluded with brief remarks by Meredith Perry, USAID's Senior Advisor for Innovation Competitions. She stressed the importance of critically examining the systems that uplift tech culture and innovation, which drive inequity in AI. Perry called for collaboration and collective action to drive the adoption and mainstreaming of intentionally inclusive approaches.

Watch here

A Huge Thank You From Our Team to Yours

On behalf of the CoP team at USAID, DAI, and Atlantic Council, we are honored to have you along for this journey so far. It has been inspiring and energizing to see

the overwhelming amount of interest in this topic as the community grew 16 fold in just six months. The learnings we gathered from this group will be available in <u>our resource library</u>, <u>our YouTube playlist series</u>, and <u>our newsletters landing page</u>, and you can still find us and each other on the <u>LinkedIn group</u> to keep the conversation going.

We hope that you won't see this as a goodbye because the workshops have wrapped up for now. Rather, looking back at what we built –together– we see the beginning of new collaborations, conversations, and camaraderie.

Summary of Past Events

April	May	June	July	August	September
Navigating bias throughout the AI lifecycle and reflecting on our own values	Integrating gender equity into international development applications of AI	Enabling transparency and accountability	Gender-inclusive AI governance	Gender representation	Collective learning, collective action, and next steps
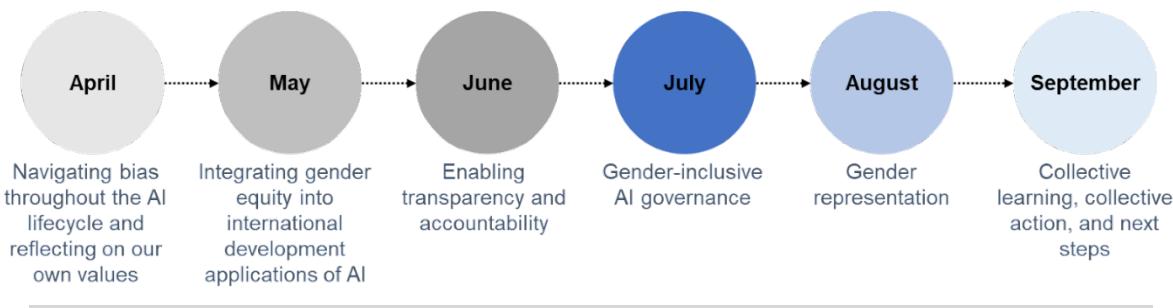
The Community Continues on LinkedIn

The community continues! 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

Critical Resources

Must-See Articles

<u>Eliminating Algorithmic Bias Is Just the Beginning of Equitable AI</u> - *Simon Friis, James Riley, Harvard Business Review: AI and Machine Learning*, September 2023

Authors Friis and Riley explore the three forces that create inequality in AI algorithms: technological forces, supply-side forces, and demand-side forces. In analyzing these forces, the authors provide recommendations for holistic approaches to regulating AI.

<u>HeForShe summit discusses gender bias in AI and how to encourage male feminist allies</u> - *UN Women*, September 2023

At UN Women's recent HeForShe summit, public and private sector leaders discussed factors that shape dominant narratives around masculinity and potential risks for AI. Leaders also provided alternatives for men to foster allyship through "respectfully disruptive" calls for gender equality.

<u>AI & Equality | International Organization Tech Governance</u> - *Women at the Table News*, September 2023

In this Women at the Table blogpost, the author calls for the urgent creation of a Tech Governance General Assembly with membership from international organizations, arguing that an international governance consortium is necessary to regulate rapidly emerging technology. Also see: <u>Women at the Table's: AI Equality</u>

<u>Toolbox</u>: a human rights-based approach to AI that centers equity & inclusion at the core of the code.

Suggested Long Reads

<u>Rebalancing Innovation: Women, AI and Venture Capital in the UK</u> - *Professor Judy Wajcman, Dr. Erin Young, and Julia De Miguel Velazquez via the Alan Turing Institute*, October 2023

A new report from the Alan Turing Institute finds major gender disparities in funding for new AI companies and products with 80% of funding between 2010 and 2022 being granted to all-male teams. The report "outlines some key recommendations for addressing gender inequality in venture capital, including improving the recruitment and promotion processes at VC firms, fostering an inclusive culture, monitoring investment practices, and diversifying the ecosystem."

<u>Building Equitable Artificial Intelligence in Health Care: Addressing Current Challenges and Exploring Future Opportunities</u> - *The Urban Institute Health Policy Center,* September 2023

This paper reviews the ways in which AI may maintain, perpetuate, or worsen inequitable outcomes in health care. The authors review current approaches to evaluating and mitigating biased AI and potential applications of AI to address health equities. Finally,they discuss current incentives for equitable AI and potential changes in the regulation and policy space.

<u>Human Rights by Design: Future-Proofing Human Rights Protection in the Era of AI</u> - *Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights*, May 2023

This report is an update to the Council of Europe's 2019 report "Unboxing AI: 10 steps to protect Human Rights." This follow-up report reviews challenges faced by member states in implementing human rights-based approaches to AI regulation, and the authors analyze potential risks that AI poses for human rights.

Funding Announcements

UNICEF Funding Opportunity for Health Tech Startups - *due October 20, 2023*
The UNICEF Venture Fund is looking to invest in Open Source frontier technology solutions that have the potential to create radical change in children's health, nutrition, and mental health. They are offering up to US$100K in equity-free funding for early stage, for-profit technology start-ups that can improve the lives of children.

European Innovation Council Accelerator - *rolling applications*
Up to €2.5 million of grants, up to €15 million of equity investments, coaching & mentoring, networking for small to mid sized tech companies within EU member states and in other countries willing to relocate to the EU. The EIC particularly welcomes applications from startups and SMEs with female CEOs.

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

- **A+ Alliance - Feminist AI Research Network Global Webinars** - October 26, 2023; *Virtual - Featuring USAID Equitable AI Challenge grantee PIT Policy Lab*
- **Financial Inclusion Week** - October 16-19, 2023; *Virtual*
- **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.*

For more GeoTech Center research and events, please visit our website and follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn.

Explore the GeoTech Center

Was this newsletter forwarded to you? If you'd like to learn more, join our community of practice by registering at this link.