The Equitable AI Newsletter

July 2023

UP NEXT: Our Next Public Event on Gender Inclusive AI Governance

Register for our next Community of Practice (CoP) webinar on **Gender Inclusive AI Governance**, Wednesday, July 26th from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. EDT! Featured speakers will provide insight on gender inclusive AI governance efforts and practices at global and national levels.

Register here

Recently: Equitable AI Core Working Group Discusses Data Accountability and Transparency

On Wednesday, June 28, the Equitable AI Community of Practice hosted its second core working group session focused on enabling transparency and accountability for gender equitable AI. Speakers from the Data Nutrition Project (DNP), Center for Financial Inclusion at Accion (CFI), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Lab provided insight on the tools they developed to promote dataset and AI transparency and accountability.

Up first, Sarah Newman, the co-founder of DNP, provided insight on their data nutrition label, which is meant to succinctly describe a given dataset's background information, its intended uses and restrictions on use, and the inference risks associated with it. DNP has collaborated with organizations to promote data transparency in international development contexts, including a program with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Centre for Humanitarian Data to adapt its standard nutrition label to fit a humanitarian dataset context. The Data Nutrition Project's next ambition is to create an external validation system, as the current system relies on self-reported information.

The workshop then shifted into a fireside chat, moderated by Genevieve Smith, USAID Gender & AI Fellow, about other equitable AI tools. Panelists included Alex Rizzi, the Senior Director of Responsible Data Practices at CFI; Lucciana Alvarez,

Research Manager at CFI; and Mara Balestrini, the Digital Transformation Lead Specialist at the IDB Lab's fAIrLAC. As part of USAID's Equitable AI Challenge, CFI is developing a tool to help investors identify harmful biases in systems; this tool seeks to imbue confidence in investors that they are funding products that do not perpetuate discrimination. Similarly, IDB Lab has developed a self-assessment tool for start-ups to evaluate whether their AI products' designs and deployments are equitable. The panelists highlighted that entrepreneurs want to create products that are safe but they often lack tools to assess the responsible use of AI in the design and deployment of the tool.

Lastly, participants joined breakout groups to discuss challenges and opportunities for AI transparency and accountability. Participants voiced that the featured tools could expand the interpretability of datasets and AI systems, and would integrate smoothly into already-existing products. However, many found that the definitions of transparency and accountability remained unclear and argued that organizations must be introspective in determining to whom they are accountable and for whom they are transparent. Additionally, participants noted the importance of raising awareness regarding inequity in AI and the tools in use to combat it. Building a foundation of knowledge about this issue makes other ambitions—such as increasing participation from impacted communities and further developing governance processes—more attainable.

Join the next Equitable AI Community of Practice webinar on **Gender Inclusive AI Governance***: Wednesday, July 26th, from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. EDT!*

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

Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars!

Upcoming community of practice webinars (registration required):

- **Governance**: Wednesday, July 26th, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. ET
- **Collective Action**: Wednesday, September 27th, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. ET

Upcoming virtual core working group sessions (invite-only):

- **Representation**: Wednesday, August 23rd, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. ET

Sign up: Would you like to showcase your work in a 5-minute flash presentation during one of our upcoming workshops? Email us with your interest at equitableai@atlanticcouncil.org!

Critical Resources

Given the theme of our next set of core working group and community of practice sessions, here are some tools and resources to learn more about representation within and governance of AI systems:

Watch & Discover

Global Index on Responsible AI - *D4D.net*
This repository from Data for Development (D4D) provides an extensive list of organizations working to develop frameworks and tools on responsible AI and equitable AI governance.

The Personal is Political: Re-imagining Data Governance in the Context of Digital Health - *Gender and Health Hub*, March 2023
This 90-minute webinar focuses on data governance and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in the context of a rapidly evolving digital health industry, and privacy and data protection legislation that is struggling to keep up.

Here's Why the World Must Collaborate on Tech Governance - *World Economic Forum*, January 2023
Watch the launch of the World Economic Forum's AI Governance Alliance - uniting industry leaders, governments, academic institutions, and civil society organizations to champion responsible global design and release of transparent and inclusive AI systems.

The Urgent Risks of Runaway AI -- and What to Do About Them - *Ted Talk*, May 2023
AI expert Gary Marcus discusses the current ability of generative AI to perpetuate misinformation and discrimination and a potential global governance to address these risks.

Must-See Articles

What is the Importance of Governance in AI? - *Enterprise Talk*, July 2023
Nikhil Sonawane explores the importance of AI governance by detailing the concerns, principles, industries, and future demands.

Artificially Inequitable? AI and Closing the Gender Gap - *OECD*, March 2023
OECD.AI Policy Observatory explores whether policy makers are doing enough to ensure that today's AI systems do not perpetuate yesterday's biases. The authors provide a brief overview and recommendations for policymakers to ensure AI governance mitigates, rather than perpetuates, gender bias.

How Singapore is Developing Trustworthy AI - *World Economic Forum*, January 2023
Yeong Zee Kin, Lee Wan Sie, and Tan Wen Riu explain how Singapore is developing an AI governance testing framework and toolkit that enables industries to demonstrate their deployment of responsible AI through objective technical tests and process checks.

How Do We Best Govern AI? - *Microsoft on the Issues*, May 2023
Brad Smith, Vice Chair and President at Microsoft, details five ways governments should consider policies, laws, and regulations around AI.

Suggested Long Reads

Artificial Intelligence and Democratic Values Index 2022 - *Center for AI and Digital Policy*, April 2023
The CAIDP 2022 report is the result of the work of more than 200 AI policy experts in almost 60 countries and provides a worldwide assessment of AI policies and

practices across 75 countries. The index includes data visualizations, quantitative, and qualitative analysis of global and national trends in AI governance, and ranks frameworks on alignment with democratic values.

Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights - *The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy*, October 2022
The Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights provides a framework of rights and equitable practices to guide future policy governing AI.

Governance of AI and Gender: Building on International Human Rights Law and Relevant Regional Frameworks - *Social Science Research Network*, July 2022
Elizabeth Coombs and Halefom Abraha examine the effectiveness of current mechanisms to address the gender implications of AI technologies by reviewing significant regional and national frameworks with a particular focus on whether they are 'fit for purpose' in addressing AI-driven gender harms.

Funding Announcements

UNICEF Venture Fund: New Frontier Technology Solutions - *due July 28th*
The UNICEF Venture Fund is looking to make up to US$100K in equity-free investments to provide early-stage (seed) funding to for-profit start-ups developing frontier technology solutions that can positively impact the lives of the world's most vulnerable children and youth.

Upcoming Events/Opportunities

- **World Conference on Gender Equity** - July 21-23, 2023; *Copenhagen, Denmark*

- **International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Applications (ICAIA-2023)** - July 22-23, 2023; *Washington, DC, United States*
- **Sixth AAAI/ACM Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, and Society** - August 8-10, 2023; *Montreal, Canada*
- **Symposium on Artificial Intelligence, Industry, Science, and Society (AI2S2)** - September 11-15, 2023; *Geneva, Switzerland*
- **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*

Local Impact: USAID's Equitable AI Challenge in Action

Addressing Gender Bias in Subnational Wealth Estimates in West Africa

Equitable AI Challenge grantees Rachel Sayers and Seth Goodman of AidData presented at the Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office's Seminar Series on June 29, sharing insight into the use of geospatial impact evaluations to measure outcomes of development interventions. The seminar explored AidData's partnership with DEval to evaluate two decades of irrigation projects in Mali, as well as AidData's ongoing project as part of USAID's Equitable AI Challenge to assess potential gender bias in subnational wealth estimates produced using AI and geospatial data. While discussing the broad range of projects AidData is involved with, there was particular interest in the use of AI and geospatial data to produce

poverty metrics which are used in geospatial impact evaluations. The talk attracted approximately 120 participants from the Department of Labor's offices across the U.S. Many attendees had little experience with geospatial data, evaluations or AI but were interested in learning more, making it a great group to inform about critical concerns dealing with Equitable AI before incorporating related approaches into their work.

Improving Natural Language Processing Solutions for Communities in Africa - Insights from AfricAI Conference

In June, Mary Akinyemi, University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Mavis Dome, Center for Democratic Development (CDD) Ghana attended the AfricAI Conference on Advancing Responsible and Open AI Ecosystem in Africa. The conference attracted over 250 people from 27 different countries and hosted over 30 unique sessions. Akinyemi presented the results of a USAID Equitable AI Challenge-funded project which developed a Natural Language Processing (NLP) platform for assessing healthcare services in an underserved Nigerian community. Both participants had the opportunity to network with other researchers and AI practitioners across Africa — identifying opportunities for NLP research for other African languages and discovering innovative solutions across the continent.

The development of Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools requires data in a particular language. While some languages, known as high-resource languages, have abundant data for machine learning-based systems, other languages, known as low-resource languages, have very few resources available. With only about 15 high resourced languages, 30 moderately resourced languages, and 90 low-resourced languages, it became a point of concern that most African languages fell into the non-resourced language window.

The presentation sparked a discussion on whether data is really the biggest challenge to advancing AI in Africa. Participants wondered whether they could build new models from scratch directed towards the African community using the little

data currently available while collecting and archiving required data to scale up models. In considering data collection by text, participants then explored whether voice (using voice-enabled feature phones) might be the best way to retrieve data for low resource languages from low- and middle-income countries. Adding a layer of complexity, participants highlighted challenges around "voice to text" processes as well as how voice data collection would look like when it comes to sensitive topics.

The discussion led to a consensus that co-creation with target communities will be necessary to developing equitable and inclusive AI. Developing gender equitable AI should not disregard the culture, norms, and practices of the indigenous communities. Rather, AI practitioners and technical teams need to build adaptable AI systems which embrace cultural nuances of African communities. Government, civil society, and academia have a key role to play in AI development funding and awareness. Policy makers must be deliberate in developing policies that enhance acceptable, accessible, and responsible AI and promote greater education and awareness raising at the grassroots level.

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