AI and the Global South

Exploring the Role of Civil Society in AI Decision-Making

Josh Estey/CARE

Executive Summary

This report amplifies voices from the Global South to explore effective inclusion and more informed decision-making related to artificial intelligence. It examines the role of Global South-based civil society organisations (CSOs) across the AI lifecycle and AI governance through first-hand insights from CSOs, in addition to stakeholders from both private sector technology and international aid organisations.

AI is advancing rapidly. From Dublin to Dar es Salaam, people are knowingly and unknowingly interacting with AI systems across diverse aspects of life. Amid this global evolution, there is an opportunity for AI to help address humankind's most complex challenges including economic development, climate change mitigation and humanitarian response.

Yet an imbalance exists determining how AI's opportunities and risks are weighed and its direction decided. While the Global North dominates AI development, and dialogue over its governance and most effective uses, Global South countries and their diverse communities have not enjoyed the same voice and influence.

Here, in their own words, participants from CSOs in twelve countries spanning four continents, share their hopes, expectations, and reservations about AI's impact on their communities. To bridge a critical gap in dialogue, their insights are supplemented with those of participants from technology Multi-National Corporations (Tech MNCs), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), UN agencies, and an international donor government organisation.

Participants share the intersecting risks that communities in crisis and development contexts face, along with concerns that AI might worsen human rights violations. They highlight the invaluable skills, relationships, and local knowledge that communities bring, as well as hopes that AI could offer new opportunities for longstanding challenges. Three key tensions underscore AI's use in humanitarian and development contexts: balancing efficiency with effectiveness, ensuring AI doesn't widen digital and data divides, and addressing the limited voice of civil society in AI. To navigate these tensions, participants propose including civil society in decision-making at all stages—from problem identification to governance—not only to uphold ethics but to improve outcomes. Overcoming barriers to inclusion will increase AI's potential while reducing the risk of ineffective or harmful systems.

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'Global South' is a contested term, and there is debate about whether 'global majority' better reflects the populations and regions in question. This report has chosen to use 'Global South' to reflect the current terminology most commonly used in humanitarian and development fields. See glossary.

As champions of community interests, CSOs have a key role in fostering equitable collaboration. Our research insights span four pathways for successful CSO inclusion:

- **#1 Expanding AI literacy and cross-sectoral knowledge sharing.**
- **#2 Increasing local decision-making and representation across the AI lifecycle.**
- **#3 Strengthening advocacy on the contextualised impacts and desired outcomes of AI.**
- **#4 Improved digital infrastructure and equitable data governance.**

Recommendations are offered to Tech MNCs, INGOs, and CSOs. These recommendations highlight the need for far greater, equitable cooperation between actors, addressing civil society participation and representation in the AI lifecycle, and what organisations need to do individually and together.

The Global Digital Compact agreed by 193 Member States at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024 signals that a human rights-based, more inclusive global AI agenda is being championed, but actions must follow principles.

To realise goals like these and ensure the benefits of AI are enjoyed by the greatest number of people, a reimagining of AI development and governance is necessary and possible. With thanks to all our participants, we hope this report contributes to that realisation.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Developed through a partnership between CARE International and Accenture, this report focuses on the challenges and opportunities of AI as perceived by Global South-based CSOs, specifically in humanitarian and development contexts.

It surfaces considerations for addressing (a) identified challenges and (b) ways to bring together civil society, technology companies, international non-governmental organisations and policy makers to ensure responsible, inclusive, and globally beneficial AI. The pace of AI development and scale of impact necessitates examining questions of civil society inclusion now, to ensure they inform current and future phases of AI's trajectory.

1.2 Value

The report facilitates shared understandings within and between sectors by highlighting a range of CSO voices. It aims to help stakeholders understand their roles in fostering more equitable decision-making across AI.

By highlighting AI's opportunities and risks for people in some of the world's most vulnerable contexts, it underscores the criticality of responsible AI development. It can also provide insights on what is possible for meaningful participation for AI being deployed anywhere. Ultimately, it aims to enable evidence-based decisions, improve strategies and identify steps towards mutually beneficial collaboration.

1.3 Audience

The report is written for a wide range of stakeholders, including Global South-based CSOs, INGOs, UN bodies and actors within Tech MNCs. It also aims to surface information and trade-offs that should be key considerations for policymakers and donors.

1.4 Research by the Numbers

We spoke to **17** CSO participants from **12** countries across **4** regions.

Countries: Colombia, India[1] , Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, The Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam and Yemen. Regions: Africa, Asia, Middle East, South America.

While CSOs are the primary focus, given the subject of this report and to get a 360-degree understanding, we also spoke to:

6 Multinational technology company participants[2]

3 United Nations (UN) agency participants

7 International Non-Governmental Organisation participants[3,4]

1 Donor/Government Organisation participant

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1 Accenture conducted the interviews with participants from India-based CSOs.

2 One of the technology company participants works for Accenture; their inclusion was based on their subject matter expertise relevant to the paper. Two participants work for the same company, meaning five multinational technology companies were included in total.

3 One of the INGO participants works for CARE; their inclusion was based on their subject matter expertise relevant to the paper.

4 Two of the organisations categorised as INGOs are NGO membership networks. One organisation categorised as an INGO is a US technology-based non-profit.

2.0 AI in Global South Humanitarian and Development Contexts Today

This section explores AI in Global South humanitarian and development contexts by means of three tensions.

The tensions are:

1. AI in Humanitarian and Development Operations: Balancing Efficiency and Effectiveness.
2. AI and the Digital Divide: Both an Amplifier and a Remedy.
3. Participation across the AI Lifecycle: From Rare Instances to Routine Practices.

Real world use cases are explored to illustrate some central opportunities, challenges and nuances that routinely face stakeholders.

Joseph Scott/CARE

2.1 AI in Humanitarian and Development Operations: Balancing Efficiency and Effectiveness

As protracted crises and funding shortfalls put pressure on aid agencies, humanitarian and development actors are increasingly looking to AI technologies to meet rising needs.[5] AI might relieve administrative burdens such as proposal writing, help needs assessments by engaging communities through chatbots, improve disaster early warning systems and speed up disaster response. AI's use in humanitarian settings also raises ethical and governance challenges that must be addressed.

SKAI is an AI model developed by the UN World Food Program (WFP) to analyse satellite images for assessing damage after crises, speeding up emergency response [6]. The model was used to help allocate resources following the 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Within a month, SKAI enabled a five-person team to assess around 600,000 buildings with over 81% accuracy, identifying 28,000 damaged or destroyed structures [7].

Building on these capabilities, recent innovations in 'collective crisis intelligence' combine similar data with localised insights from affected communities and frontline responders via crowdsourcing, crowd mapping and web scraping from social media, largely but not exclusively for rapid-onset natural disasters. Predictive analytics make predictions about future events aimed at assisting crisis preparedness and response.[8]

The rise of AI in humanitarian contexts brings new ethical and governance questions and can exacerbate existing inequalities. Concerns include unrepresentative data, algorithmic bias, privacy risks[9] and overreliance on fallible technology outputs.[10] Pressure to adopt AI tools can divert resources from more effective, human-centred approaches and undermine human rights-based, participatory programming. In Jordan, the World Bank-supported Takaful program used algorithmic poverty ranking to decide welfare distribution. Human rights observers found the ranking system oversimplified people's economic realities, reinforced gender discrimination by directing payments to male heads of households and created barriers for those with limited internet access and digital literacy.[11]

These issues highlight the importance of ensuring predictive analytics complement – rather than replace – local, human-centred work serving vulnerable populations.

"We're seeing that these systems often lead to more problems rather than solving them. In social protection and public administration, while AI and algorithmic tools are used to manage access to services, the results are frequently disappointing. Many people who need social protection face more challenges because of these systems."

INGO participant [12]

2.2 AI and the Digital Divide: Both an Amplifier and a Remedy

The discourse over AI and inclusion reflects wider debates over digital technologies and development, with inequalities compounding along the lines of gender, race, language, and ethnic and socio-economic background. Digital divides can affect communities across three different levels: access (internet connectivity, data affordability, devices, infrastructure), effective use (digital literacy, confidence) and adverse outcomes associated with using ICTs such as inequitable opportunities[13] and technology-assisted gender-based violence (GBV).[14]

AI can both amplify and alleviate social issues. Taking GBV as an example, the UNDP-supported 'Digital Violence Against Women Monitor' used AI classification tools to gather real-time evidence of insults and threats toward public figures such as women politicians, journalists, activists and artists, generating evidence for public policies and actions to prevent GBV.[15] At the same time, the data and infrastructural foundations of AI magnify existing gender inequalities. For example, Generative AI is likely to affect more than twice the share of female employment due to automation of clerical work.[16] In many Global South countries, gendered data gaps are widened by lower internet and smartphone access among women compared to men.[17,18] With fewer women working within AI fields, gendered bias is harder to catch.[19]

Comprehensive bias mitigation is critical before any AI-based intervention is deployed. This was exemplified in Mexico, where state government developed an AI-based early alert system to address student dropout rates.[20] A gender-focused research consortium uncovered a bias that could have caused the model to miss up to 4% of at-risk girls, and subsequently upskilled technical staff on equitable, responsible and inclusive AI practices.[21, 22] Post-bias review enables mitigation of bias that may have gone unnoticed, or that has emerged anew due to changes in the underlying data or in the model in use.

Because issues like gender inequity and gendered AI impacts relate to norms that are both universal and culturally-specific, it is critical to engage a diverse range of perspectives to shape how AI is built and used in different settings.

Nyokabi Kahura/CARE

2.3 Participation across the AI Lifecycle: From Rare Instances to Routine Practices

Stakeholders recognise the need for an inclusive, globally-minded approach to AI. This can be understood, in part, as a response to the concentration of AI's development and governance discussions in the Global North, despite AI's global reach and impact.[23]

Imbalances in governance and benefit-sharing are intertwined with historical contexts of power, exemplified in concepts like data colonialism.[24] As governance discussions often exclude equal input from Global South countries, resulting decisions and practices may be prone to knowledge gaps and assumptions about risks and opportunities in those regions, rendering AI systems ineffective or even harmful.[25] If Global South civil societies are to materially participate in AI decision-making, these contexts must inform a reimagining of who is involved, when and how.

'Participatory AI' is an emerging field aiming to build systems that enhance community agency and self-determination, ensuring they are inclusive, trustworthy, and equitable. Linked to human-centred design through a focus on engaging impacted people directly in problem identification and solution development, participatory approaches can take place across the AI lifecycle, from design through to deployment and oversight.[26] Standards of *empowerment*, *reciprocity*, and *reflexivity* are core to Participatory AI, as is a shared definition of meaningful participation, and what it aims to achieve in specific contexts.[27]

When considering civil society inclusion, it's critical to form a context-specific understanding of Global South AI ecosystems. From a data perspective, firms and research hubs in Global South regions are producing their own AI and data solutions developing innovative sharing practices.[28] One example is the Makerere Artificial Intelligence Lab in Uganda, which has an ongoing project looking at low-resourced languages in East Africa. It aims to develop high quality text and speech datasets for Luganda, Runyankore-Rukiga, Acholi, Swahili and Lumasaaba to help fully realise the benefits of advances in natural language processing and voice technology.[29]

Moving from a data perspective to labour practices, the Data Workers Inquiry is a community-based project in which data workers lead inquiries into their workplaces supported by formally trained qualitative researchers.[30] Previous inquiries have looked at the experiences of Kenyan, Syrian and Venezuelan data workers.

At a global governance level, influential fora like the UK AI Safety Summit and OECD have predominantly represented Global North countries.[31] The Global Digital Compact, agreed by 193 member states at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, provides a multi-stakeholder framework for global AI governance and digital cooperation. Framed within human rights, international law and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it aims to close digital divides in and between states, calling for strengthened data governance cooperation at all levels with the "full and equal representation of all countries". [32]

Overall, shifting stakeholders' mindsets such that they think inclusively-by-default will help more participatory approaches to AI to become common practice across the full AI lifecycle.

2.4 Mental Models of AI

Participants' mental models of AI – their internal representations shaping how they understand AI, make decisions about it, and how they predict its outcomes – vary significantly, based on their diverse experiences. These differences shape perceptions of AI's opportunities and challenges but can prevent shared understanding and dialogue.[33]

Recognising the mental models of others is essential for collaboration.[34,35] The following examples uncovered in the interviews help interpret the findings.

CSOs

AI is a powerful resource in society, "powerful for those that can wield it".

A CSO participant in the Philippines believes a positive future with AI is contingent on changing the power imbalances which allow only few entities to be better positioned to develop and deploy more advanced AI.

AI is a mirror, and its risks or opportunities reflect the people who use it.

A CSO participant in South Africa has a relational perception of AI[36] ; "it's a perfect tool to use, if the person using it is perfect" and cannot envisage a future where AI plays a helping role in their community, in which people lack basic access to ICTs.

AI is like a machine acting "with a human mind".

A CSO participant in Jordan describes an AI powered mental health chatbot in the refugee camp where she works. She trusts AI [37] to help alleviate time and resource constraints in the future.

INGOs & UN Agencies

AI is "beginning to permeate everything".

An INGO participant holds a mental model of AI as an encroaching political and technological race that is changing her organisation's operations and policies.

AI is "more back-office efficiency and anticipatory power".

A UN Agency participant perceives AI as a promising tool, but one that brings new concerns around guardrails for communities, responsible data holding and working appropriately with technology partners.

AI is as powerful as the data it holds.

An INGO participant perceives AI by "the power differential it brings" and holds a fear for a future hierarchy that could disempower communities whose data is excluded.

Tech MNCs

AI is transforming work productivity and efficiency.

A Tech MNC participant perceives AI by its two frontiers of generative and predictive applications, where benefits hinge "on good data and the right use cases".

AI is evolving too fast.

A Tech MNC participant in proximity to Silicon Valley, describes concerns for AI widening global inequality. AI is perceived through "the implications and fears surrounding the push towards Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)".[38]

AI is at the core of everything.

A Tech MNC participant perceives AI by its omnipresence; "It's everything we've been doing for many years, from content ranking to content moderation".

3.0 Analysing Pathways to Global South Civil Society Inclusion in AI

A variety of approaches have been suggested as a means of improving civil society participation and inclusion across the AI lifecycle, which we term 'pathways'. [39]

Our conversations with CSOs, Tech MNCs, UN agencies and INGOs allowed us to analyse these pathways to build a picture of what stakeholders believe is desirable and feasible, grounded in their expertise and experience. Inevitably, differences between countries' local needs and civil society space create nuances in if, how and why different pathways can work in specific contexts. As one CSO participant in Nigeria stated,

"Every community and every country has its own clear difficulties, and because of that it makes us have certain kinds of customised intersectional programs."

Still, evaluating pathways by considering diverse stakeholders' perspectives helps uncover commonalities and generate forward-looking considerations to inform action.

Pathway #1 Expanding AI literacy

Pathway #2 Increasing localised decision-making

Pathway #3 Strengthening advocacy

Pathway #4 Improved digital infrastructure

Pathway #1 Expanding AI literacy and cross-sectoral knowledge sharing

Improving AI literacy of both communities and CSOs is a prerequisite for informed decision-making around AI, whether individuals are using AI tools like chatbots or are subjects of significant AI-based decisions. Simultaneously, technologists need greater literacy regarding Global South communities' contexts and lived experiences to better understand the downstream impacts of AI models that will filter into societies, and when designing specifically for humanitarian and development contexts.

Özge Sebzeci/CARE

CSOs see AI literacy as conferring community agency but are mixed on how it will impact their own operations.

For CSOs, AI literacy is crucial to ensure greater agency in harnessing AI's benefits, influencing its lifecycle and mitigating harms – especially important for vulnerable groups.

"One of the most critical things for us as a community is to raise our levels of AI literacy so that we're not stuck between thinking either AI is going to save the world or destroy the world, and actually understand how to use it effectively" —International donor/government organisation participant.

CSOs saw potential for AI to increase educational access, including for women and girls who may not otherwise attend school or college. AI won't overcome structural inequalities preventing access to schooling (like gender) but may increase access to knowledge and tutelage. Yet they characterised confidence with AI tools as a 'positional good' [40] potentially widening inequality, consolidating advantages for the better-resourced or powerful, while limiting socioeconomic opportunities for those without access to technology.

Regarding AI's impacts on their own operations, views were mixed. CSOs with greater digital literacy and skills are already using AI to reduce administrative burden, analyse data, and free up time for community work:

"...creating a proposal at the beginning, from searching for the data, analysing the data took up to a month sometimes, but now we can compress it to half the time giving us the opportunity to focus on the important things."—CSO participant in Morocco.

Equally, participants worried about automation leading to loss of local colleagues' jobs. Others don't see much use in generative AI tools at present, in some cases because their own language and cultural context is not represented in training data, meaning tools simply aren't effective. Others report issues with staff using generative AI indiscriminately and without review of outputs. CSO participants also raised concerns about the extent to which communities with low AI literacy, and particularly vulnerable individuals, can give 'informed consent' when subject to AI systems deployed by others, or when using AI tools themselves. While this links to wider arguments about AI explainability, the potential for exploitation is amplified during humanitarian crises, including instances where affected communities must provide personal data to receive aid.

"There is a manipulation of the vulnerability... they (communities) are signed up to things that they don't know about or are not fully informed about." —CSO participant in South Africa.

Nevertheless, participants stressed that AI literacy and innovation in their regions are underestimated, mirroring colonial perspectives that persist in the aid sector:[41]

"it's a negative stereotype, influential people do not believe that certain kind of talents could do groundbreaking AI-centred innovation" —CSO participant in Nigeria. As a result, regional expertise, research and local literacy programs can be overlooked. Indeed, digital-focused CSOs use teaching techniques grounded in local culture and technology to upskill communities in AI, explaining complex concepts in ways that will make more sense to learners.

INGOs' AI literacy varies, shaping their role in supporting CSOs. Tech MNCs grapple with responsibility and organisational will.

INGO interviewees highlighted that AI literacy remains low even among staff leading AI projects. As pilots move beyond streamlining 'back-end' administrative tasks to projects that use individuals' data or which directly impact communities (e.g. chatbots and data analytics for beneficiary targeting), relatively few internal AI safety, ethics and accountability mechanisms exist, suggesting the need for upskilling on responsible AI.

This was echoed by a Tech MNC participant who underlined their own efforts with respect to humanitarian agencies' responsibilities as AI deployers.

"We do red-teaming of the models, [including] mitigation work and human rights, but we can't understand every possible location. Equally, there's a responsibility of the deployer to also understand: does the way that they are using this product create risks? Have they put in place mitigations?" —Tech MNC participant

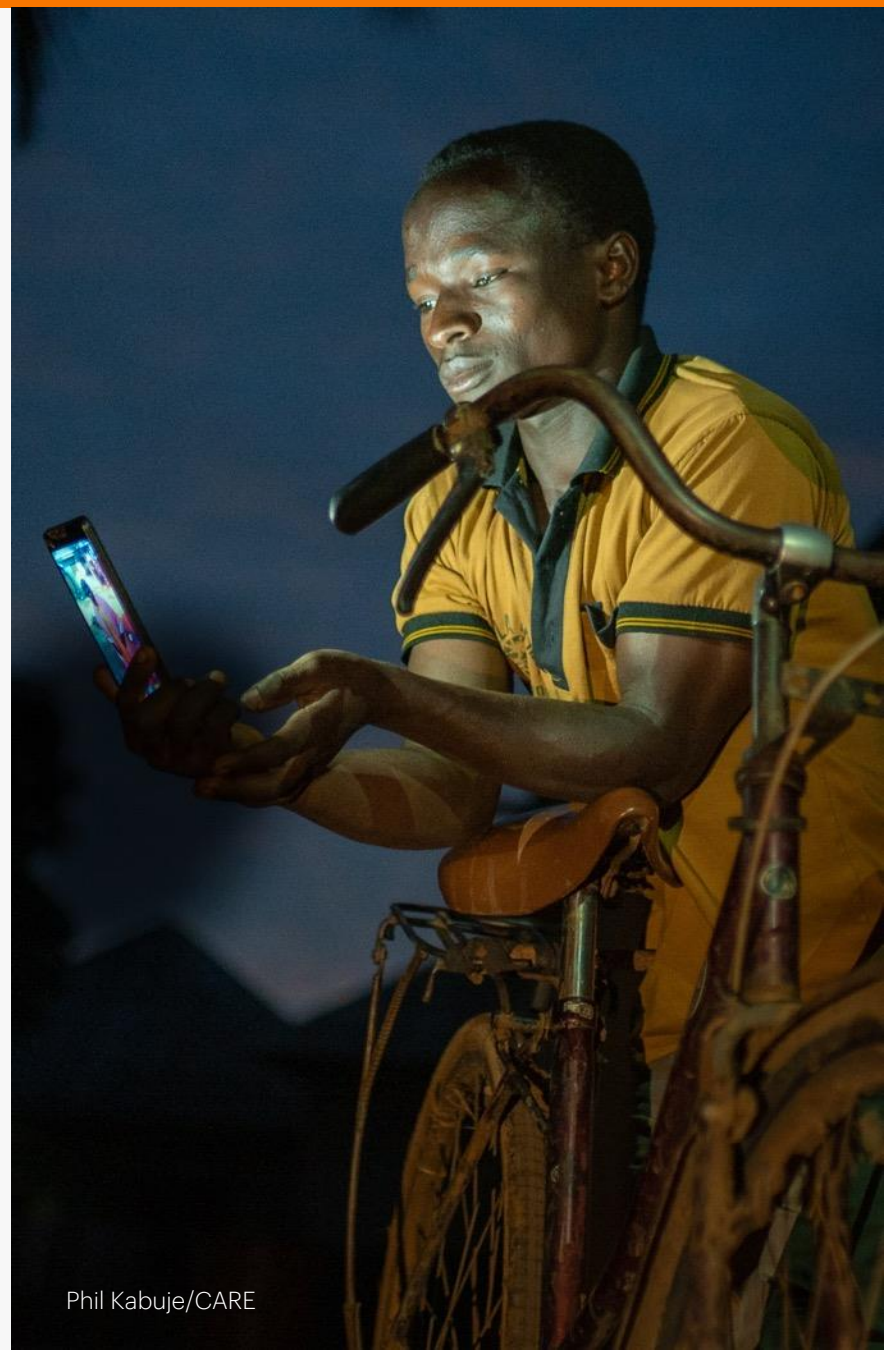
Similarly, some actors within Tech MNCs want to push their organisations to contribute more to ensuring local context and mitigations are factored in, but signaled difficulties building a compelling proposition:

"It's really focusing on resourcing based on where your users are rather than on where your business is. That's not an easy sell to anyone, where these are for-profit companies." —Tech MNC Participant.

Some INGOs with technology expertise want to aid in capacity building and cross-learning between CSOs and international aid agencies,

"ensuring that the local organisations and [international] partners are aware of the different aspects of AI and then help them and encourage them to build those relationships locally." —INGO Participant. INGOs consider tech companies and governments alongside themselves as mutually responsible for developing actionable literacy programs and accountability programs, including due diligence obligations in AI,

"[so that] we can give people the ability to critically evaluate, whether or not a system is useful or good for them." —US technology-based non-profit participant.



Phil Kabuje/CARE

So, what does this mean?

Most CSOs profess insufficient knowledge in how to utilise AI tools and see the need to empower communities to effectively use AI while understanding its risks and opportunities. They bring cultural knowledge vital to making AI education relevant to learners.

- Private, non-profit and public actors wish to share responsibilities to heighten civil society agency and voice through AI literacy programs, ranging from basic to advanced skills for different societal needs.
- Literacy supports informed consent, but consent is compromised when access to aid depends on personal data like biometrics.
- INGOs and tech companies can see the benefits of sharing knowledge and responsibility on literacy programs, due diligence practices[42] and pilots, but require honest brokers and help overcoming trust issues.
- INGOs and tech companies can collectively build sociotechnical literacy: both technically savvy and informed by social influence of/on the technology.

Tech MNCs

- **Upskill**
- Develop long-term strategies to upskill individuals and communities in the Global South in AI, incorporating participatory and co-creation methods.
- **Absorb responsibility**
- Embrace outsize responsibility and role in responsible AI including harm reporting.
- **Upskill internally**
- Develop internal sociotechnical literacy through more social science and humanitarian expertise on project teams.
- **Share**
- Document and share due diligence practices and learnings from AI pilots with deployers (agencies working in humanitarian and development).

INGOs & UN Agencies

- **Train**
- Conduct AI literacy training focused on Responsible AI and Participatory AI principles, most urgently for staff on AI projects.
- **Build CSO capacity**
- For INGOs versed in digital inclusion and technology, engage in capacity-building efforts with CSOs.
- **Leverage commitments**
- Leverage donor states' commitments to a Global Fund for AI within the Global Digital Compact and advocate for increased investment in local AI capacity building targeted to regional/national digital skills and socio-economic goals.
- **Build interdisciplinarity**
- Convene interdisciplinary AI project teams, encompassing skills across IT, data and cyber security, humanitarian programme and sectoral areas, gender and protection expertise, and local community engagement staff.[43]
- **Sandbox**
- Develop strategies for AI sandboxing[44] as a means of experimenting with pilots in a safe environment, knowledge-sharing results and learnings.

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[44]AI sandboxes provide a 'walled-off," secure environment where AI tools and programs can be experimented with, mitigating many security and privacy risks and ensuring the data or practices are not brought into the public domain or used to train public tools Generative AI for Humanitarians. Digital Humanitarian Network.

CSOs

- **Use resources**

  For those less familiar with AI, explore online resources around AI impacts and opportunities, and where CSOs can come into the AI lifecycle.

- **Address impacts**

  For CSOs supporting intersectional groups, consider differing impacts of AI for these groups within ongoing protection and rights work.

- **Seek funding**

  Seek funding and support to share knowledge about community literacy needs and AI impacts.

Donors

- **Fund upskilling**

  Develop business cases and request proposals supporting AI literacy to equip communities with skills to a) maximise the benefits of AI, including across education, women's economic justice and wider economic development, and b) be able to exercise informed consent and identify potential AI harms.

- **Employ blended funding**

  Explore blended finance mechanisms as a means to increase available funding for AI literacy programming without diverting funds from existing humanitarian allocations.


John Hewat/CARE

Pathway #2
Increasing localised decision-making across the AI lifecycle

Applications of AI are rapidly increasing, but civil society participation in AI decision-making is scant.[45] With deep knowledge of the communities they represent, CSOs are uniquely placed to help identify the issues they face and promote local engagement.[46] CSOs and INGOs believe communities should lead on identifying their problems and solutions related to AI, just as they should for any successful humanitarian and development programming. However, challenges in designing participation (e.g. problem identification, trust, practical questions about who to engage, how, and when) must be navigated.

Laura Noel/CARE

CSOs are experts in community outreach and want to play an active role in shaping outcomes.

On grounds of both ethics and efficacy, CSOs and INGOs see the deficit in locally led AI decision-making as a major missed opportunity. It is:

"not only a matter of equity, voice and dignity, that's also the only way you're going to develop solutions that are effective" —INGO Participant.

CSOs are experts in community outreach and participatory approaches to humanitarian project lifecycles that they see as applicable to localising AI. From design and planning to implementation and ongoing feedback, they enable community influencers and leaders to voice needs, concerns, and best practices.

"We advocate that to government, INGOs or local authorities…it can expedite partnership agreements. When we convey the message of beneficiaries… it leads to acceptance... We continue to voice their feedback into amendment of project design or implementation" —CSO participant in Yemen.

Participants raised the question of how meaningful dialogue with the private sector should take place. Many CSOs have reservations about presenting needs to tech companies, believing that they are either inaccessible or disinterested in societal outcomes:

"What they are thinking about is earning more money, not that it brings a benefit" —CSO participant in Colombia.

As service providers and advocates for their communities, CSOs want technology companies to act as duty-bearers of human rights and to:

"be co-responsible in guaranteeing these rights" – CSO participant in Colombia.

Some doubt that transparency about data collection procedures will change without increased regulation and enforcement around data rights, particularly for Generative AI, but want firms to lean into:

"more accountability mechanisms, we can have more monitoring mechanisms" —Participant from refugee-led CSO in Turkey. Just as much as wanting to shape and mitigate potential harms, CSOs want to be deeply involved in shaping AI's potential benefits:

"there is so much to talk about rights and violation of rights that we are not considering the uses of technology as a strategy... the work you are doing is important for civil society to organise itself and make clear requests and generate a dialogue about AI with decision-makers" —CSO participant in Colombia. In practice, community-driven approaches mean value propositions can be more effectively and ethically shaped. Indeed, one noted that communities they worked with were:

"more receptive" to their local technology programs if they are supported by a recognised technology brand — CSO participant in Philippines.

Tech MNCs see value in localisation but face practical and ethical challenges in community engagement.

Tech MNCs acknowledge that most AI development does not prioritise consultation in humanitarian and development contexts which are,

"certainly not a core market, so…you approach it from a corporate social responsibility…and creation of social value perspective" —Tech MNC participant.

AI for social impact, developed in the Global North, is often driven by experimentation rather than working with affected communities to assess opportunities.

"I see...technology for development being very technology-centric and very little development-centric. There's this element of upskilling, …a good understanding of what problems are really trying to be solved, secondly, the potential of technology to solve those problems" —Tech MNC participant.

Ultimately, scaling AI is challenging when systems should be shaped by local context and local data to improve impact:

"You want your process to be standardised, and from a global level, it makes a lot of sense, but that doesn't necessarily make sense from a local level where people will have quite differing needs" —INGO participant.

Many technologists understand the value of localisation but face practical and ethical challenges in community engagement for localisation, finding it unfeasible to include all affected groups. For ease, companies default to interlocutors from international civil society organisations based in Global North capitals with staff who speak local languages. The question of 'how' to engage communities is compounded by fears of being accused of exploitation:

"How to avoid being, or being perceived as extractive? I need to ask communities, but if I do, it's extractive" —Tech MNC Participant.

International aid agencies are keen to facilitate local involvement in AI decisions. At present, however, they have critical questions around risk and civil society participation that are being lost amid pressures to compete for funding and demonstrate increased efficiency:

"all the incentives are pushing us toward greater use of [AI] and less examination of structural harms" —INGO Participant .

Many wish to see collaboration between civil society and powerful tech companies, but their core principles mean they are reluctant to act as brokers for fear of causing harm:

"how do we give ourselves sufficient assurance that this participatory consultative approach is sufficiently in the interests of the communities and the CSO's that you're operating with? That's the next phase, demonstrate what could be possible if we think about this from the perspective of community empowerment and voice rather than aid" —INGO Participant.

As one UN agency participant noted, the creation of legitimate spaces is needed for civil society, technologists, INGOs, and policymakers to work together without reinforcing power imbalances:

"an environment where parties with different motivations can find common ground." Motivations will differ: finding overlapping purpose will be the vital enabler.

So, what does this mean?

CSOs bring community knowledge, social ties, and participation methods that bridge the localisation gap, but power imbalances must be managed. As one CSO participant from South Africa emphasised, AI institutions should lead the efforts on responsible AI use, with civil society acting as a pressure group to ensure accountability and transparency.

- Methods of community participation in AI lifecycles already exist, enhance program effectiveness and local agency, but are not yet common knowledge or practice. [47]
- Real world examples and evaluations of AI tools blended with participation of frontline responders and communities affected by crises show promise for enhancing predictive AI use cases.[48]
- Because Large Language Model (LLM) foundation models are inherently divorced from local context, some stakeholder and community participation and localisation inputs are potentially more effective if they happen later in development stages or further downstream.[49]

Tech MNCs

Gain fluency

- Develop an understanding of Participatory AI[26,27] approaches along the AI lifecycle, including emergent cases and innovation in Global South civil society and research centres.

Consult

- Consult CSOs and INGOs on how to ensure AI systems are relevant, appropriate, and offer a clear value proposition for impacted groups.

Anticipate

- Employ decision trees, trade-off tables, and consequencing kits for use with INGOs and CSOs so that responsible AI choices and unintended consequences are anticipated.[50,51]

INGOs & UN Agencies

Empower

- Prioritise community level decision-making, empowering communities to analyse problems and identify optimal responses.

Practice participation

- Explore, establish and share best practice in Participatory AI processes, prioritising principles of empowerment, reciprocity and reflexivity.

Localise

- Develop and share approaches for localised AI decision-making based on Core Humanitarian Standards [52] and Accountability to Affected People (AAP)[53] commitments. Complement Participatory AI processes with iterations of existing participatory, localisation, and community feedback mechanisms.[54,55]

Convene

- Convene and facilitate open, equitable dialogue between CSOs and tech companies.[56] Explore collaboration with communities of practice and initiatives aimed at greater public feedback into AI systems and algorithmic reviews, such as socio-technical red-teaming.[57]

Lead with principles

- Be led by humanitarian principles alongside ethical data and Responsible AI practices when procuring, piloting or deploying AI.

Equip

- When deploying AI tools, consider supporting partner CSOs with training from technology providers to become ‘AI explainers’, enabling staff to help communities understand information presented by AI systems, and its limitations (e.g. health apps).[58]

CSOs

- **Assess**
- Critically appraise potential AI solutions to existing community problems, considering whether they are appropriate, inclusive, or complement community-based approaches, rejecting them where they do not.

- **Engage locally**
- Consider engaging with local tech developers to produce or contextualise AI systems that reflect local community needs.

- **Articulate role**
- For tech-focused CSOs, articulate and amplify the critical role of broader, non-tech focused CSOs in elevating community voice and participation in decision-making throughout the AI lifecycle and on AI governance.

Donors

- **Develop participation criteria**
- Make demonstrable Responsible AI and Participatory AI approaches a condition of funding for humanitarian and development AI pilots and projects.

- **Lead with human need**
- Critically appraise policies and funding mechanisms that might encourage tech-solutionism, particularly those that might divert funding from more appropriate people-centred responses or investment in local personnel.


Abdulrahman Alhobishi / CARE

Pathway #3 Strengthening advocacy by civil society and humanitarian actors on the contextualised impacts and desired outcomes of AI systems

A core role of Global South CSOs is as advocates for the communities they serve.[59] As UN and humanitarian actors increasingly deploy AI systems, more CSOs are highlighting the importance of analysing the implications of AI from two perspectives: its effect on aid programming and its broader influence on society, with implications for different advocacy audiences,

"It's two pillars, not one: [impact] on humanitarian operations, and on the communities being served." —Participant from refugee-led CSO in Turkey.

Different barriers mean that too few CSOs are currently leveraging and applying their local knowledge to gaps in AI conversations.

Tarek Satea / CARE

To influence policy, CSOs want to develop their evidence base and access to decision-makers, but this often hinges on their resource levels.

CSOs need more evidence-based research if they are to influence policy and the private sector:

"If we want to have any influence with the government to control AI, we have to provide research results…to clearly quantify and show numbers for how AI can cause harm, then we slowly convince them" —CSO participant in Vietnam. Better-resourced CSOs who can meet donor requirements around due diligence may have direct relationships with technology companies. Some present a clear picture on how the private sector can be influenced:

"the best way is to have a pilot phase with the company, (for us) to control the methodology, the way of communicating with beneficiaries… by analysing the results, we can see what we need to change" —CSO participant in Jordan. Generally, grassroots organisations lack such access to high-level interactions with technology developers or policy makers: invaluable knowledge on community needs and outcomes can be lost as a result.

Many local policy makers are new to AI: as in the Global North, this creates a vacuum for advocacy, meaning CSOs miss opportunities to get their voice heard early.

"[AI] is something that is still new in terms of a governmental level and they [government] have to have that structure before people get to chime in" —CSO participant in Nigeria. CSOs have expertise in advocating for communities across issues from climate change mitigation to gender equality. They believe advocacy around AI's unique aspects should still be built on existing approaches:

"we find an audience either at the local level, at government, or to get the knowledge out there more widely with international groups like the UN, World Bank and multilaterals" —CSO participant in the Philippines.

CSOs also work with closed communities, and know how to sequence approaches to support them:

"We have to reach the first line influencers in the community. We always rely on community leaders; we explain our objectives. Then through community leaders we reach other individuals in that community" —CSO participant in Jordan.

Advocacy is more likely to succeed if it is practical and carries a value proposition that speaks to the goals or agenda of the organisation designing the technology, who may not have a deep understanding of the people who will ultimately use or be impacted by what they're building. Here, advocacy overlaps with AI design and development:

"We know their (communities') mindset, we know the infrastructure available, how much they are capable of using it…these kind of inputs will really add value for those who are creating AI" —CSO participant in India.

INGOs and Tech MNCs see the need to amplify CSO voices and for inclusive environments where all stakeholders can find common ground.

INGOs and UN agencies can do more to hear and amplify CSO voices in relation to AI's impacts, Participatory AI and AI governance. While international aid agencies often have relationships with Tech MNCs, their engagement with CSOs on AI advocacy issues remains limited.

Highlighting tensions that can exist between civil society and technology firms, one Tech MNC felt some rights advocates were reluctant to engage in constructive dialogue:

"If you're trying to engage with companies, and you call them evil, it likely won't work. If you approach positively, finding a different kind of language, you will have more likelihood of success. A key challenge is how to work with outside activists to develop ideas and recommendations that will strengthen your hand in the company, help inform your conversations and due diligence you're doing. A lot is about tone and approach as well as substance" —Tech MNC participant.

Representation in governance conversations on the world stage is imbalanced. As a consequence of geopolitical dynamics, inclusive governance [60] around AI is limited even where civic space is more open. When Global South civil society are excluded from high-level decision-making processes, it leads to policies and standards that do not reflect their needs.

"My concern, when I go to these safety summits, there is no narrative that includes the global majority. There is an assumption that the problems of the Global North are the same problems that are being faced, or that when they 'catch up' we will have solved the problems. I think that is the wrong approach to it" —US technology-based non-profit participant.

One INGO representative considered what a strategy to kickstart collaborative processes might actually look like on the world stage:

"… a consortium that was started up between big tech players who want to get into this, this civil society space, and Global South civil society actors in those communities…and strategise around what these donor programs should look like… create a strategic approach for how big tech should be behaving in the Global South" —INGO participant.


Jorja Currington/CARE

So, what does this mean?

Effective and emerging advocacy on AI issues is hindered by insufficient cross-sectoral dialogue and a lack of shared language and understanding. Broadly, successful advocacy in the context of AI's impact on civil society in the Global South hinges on a range of factors:

- Many CSOs cannot prioritise AI over their core mandates but have much to contribute with the right access and additional funding to enable collaboration.
- More research is needed to produce diverse and robust evidence around AI impacts specific to different communities, populations, and localities.
- Global AI governance and safety summits have thus far not featured meaningful participation of Global South civil society representatives.
- INGOs advocate for consortia and other multistakeholder engagements but have yet to establish their own role in facilitating such engagements.

Tech MNCs

- **Educate**
- Promote internal understanding of how the diversity of lived experiences, types of knowledge, and cultural norms in the Global South is central to the impact and efficacy of AI systems.
- **Network**
- Engage regional research networks to better understand issues, expertise, and initiatives in different localities.
- **Platform**
- Support ideation around platforms for dialogue between technologists, INGOs, and Global South CSOs and advocate for inclusion of CSOs in AI policy and decision-making forums.
- **Join voices**
- Partner with local CSOs and/or INGOs on research and engagement initiatives to better understand and protect human rights in relation to AI.

INGOs & UN Agencies

- **Integrate**
- Consider the implications of AI across existing advocacy priorities, linking to commitments on SDGs and human rights made within the Global Digital Compact, including gender equity, child rights, and protection in humanitarian settings, evolving messaging as necessary.
- **Enable grassroots**
- Foster environments for grassroots movements to influence AI deployment, whether advocating for adoption, rejection, or equitable processes.
- **Amplify**
- Elevate the voices of Global South civil society in relation to AI decision-making by supporting CSOs to attend and speak at international forums such as the AI for Good Summit and the UN General Assembly.
- **Target**
- Enhance understanding of the objectives of specific technology actors and firms to ensure advocacy efforts are targeted.

CSOs

- **Strengthen advocacy**
- To inform advocacy, gain familiarity with the commitments to protect human rights in relation to technology and overcome the digital divide made by Member States in the Global Digital Compact.
- **Collaborate**
- Consider initiating collaborations with other national CSOs and prioritise coalitions to strengthen grassroots influence over AI design, development, deployment, governance, and the shape of 'Participatory AI.'
- **Contextualise**
- Consider integrating research into the implications of AI on local communities within existing assessments, applying an intersectional lens to review potential risks and opportunities for different groups, helping to build advocacy rooted in community-based data and analysis.

Donors

- **Fund research**
- Develop mechanisms to support CSOs, including women-led organisations and those working on intersectional rights, who want to analyse and share learnings about AI's impacts on affected communities.
- **Support inclusion**
- Call for international humanitarian and development forums, particularly those discussing technology, to ensure meaningful inclusion of Global South civil society within panels, including visa support and funding for in-person attendance.
- **Operationalise**
- Engage with local CSO and international NGO partners on the Global Digital Compact to shape strategies for operationalising the commitments within it.

Pathway #4
Improved digital infrastructure and equitable data governance

For AI ecosystems to improve societal outcomes, two key elements are essential: effective digital infrastructure (including cloud services, data processors, device access, reliable internet, and electricity) and quality data. While the digital and data divides in the Global South vary and are linked to broader inequalities, enhancing infrastructure and addressing data inequities are widely recognised as crucial for better outcomes in these communities.[61] For communities to participate equitably in data ecosystems beyond being viewed as data sources, end-users, or digital workers, they must have agency in how their data is collected and used.

Laura Noel/CARE

[61] An estimated 2.6 billion people, or 33% of the world's population is offline. Internet use is tightly linked to the level of a country's economic development. Digital gender parity is still stark: 17% more women than men have no access to the internet globally. Least developed countries continue to exhibit low levels of internet use and to generate low gender parity scores. Facts and Figures. ITU.

CSOs work on the frontlines, meaning they're required to navigate a multitude of digital infrastructure challenges.

Connectivity is top of mind for many CSOs when thinking about AI:

"To have access to AI, you must have an internet connection" —CSO participant in Colombia. Variation in digital infrastructures between communities mean that many are not yet engaging with AI directly. CSOs highlight how intersectional challenges like education, income, urban/rural distinctions, and gender divides compound effects.

"Not only because they don't have robust cell phones; many do not even use computers because they are rural women" —CSO participant in Colombia. One CSO provided an important reminder about the need to accompany infrastructure development with complementary social programs, so that any benefits can be fully realised by communities:

"Access to the internet is considered a threat...not as a resource but as something that one must be cautious of because it is not understood" —CSO participant in Colombia.

For CSOs looking to upskill communities on digital skills, the question of infrastructure is inextricably linked with national or local government capacity and/or their ability to communicate with government decision-makers.

"There are some institutions or there are some spaces that you go and you don't even see as little as a computer or a keyboard in their ICT lab. And then it's, you know, it kind of makes you step back a little and say, what can you do in addressing it? And then that's when bureaucracy comes in, because as much as we want to do this, they are reaching out to the government....and nobody is able to help you set up all of this infrastructure for you to, you know, implement your project" —CSO participant in Nigeria.

The affordability of AI-compatible hardware and software licenses, and local data prices were among the barriers mentioned by CSO participants when it came to the possibility of using AI themselves or in their work with communities.

Others were skeptical about the accuracy of AI outputs, including predictive analytics, especially on complex societal issues for which machine learning systems struggle to capture nuanced phenomena [62], or where unrepresentative data used to train Generative AI leads to inaccurate information about Global South contexts.

"It doesn't provide the full picture because it gets metadata on the internet. Not all information is on the internet especially in our language" —CSO participant in Yemen.

Many CSOs raised the dilemmas posed by data gaps. They know that many groups are under-represented in AI systems that impact their lives. When basic needs are unmet, however, those must be prioritised:

"Data from vulnerable communities is very limited...vulnerable people don't have things to eat or the bare minimum. I can't see how their inputs will be incorporated in systems" —CSO participant in Yemen.

INGOs and Tech MNCs recognise progressive solutions are needed to overcome legacy infrastructural challenges.

Perceived risks like economic instability, regulatory uncertainty, and high research and development (R&D) costs deter big tech from investing in tailoring AI models to many specific markets and communities. This leads to a shortfall in models that address the specific needs of Global South users and improve social outcomes. Tech companies may invest in creating inclusive models for English speakers in one region but lack business incentive to do the same everywhere.

"The business case on AI impact in the Global South is just not present yet" —Tech MNC Participant.

Meanwhile, international aid agencies are collecting data in growing amounts, including biometric data. INGOs eager to use technology in humanitarian efforts are grappling with how to apply the 'do no harm' principle, particularly regarding data protection and sovereignty:

"We have increasingly realised that the business model of the sector has become extractive...We went from... giving people assistance based on their needs, with very little taken from them in response, to ...taking a lot of data to support ...the assumed benefits of that digitalisation, and we haven't really grappled with that shift..." —INGO participant.

AI systems deployed in the Global South may create new data divides, to which an INGO participant explained there are only two solutions: data sharing or data collection:

"Both are different, obviously on the data collection point; it's very costly. It requires specific skills...it may or may not be a good fit depending on what you're trying to do. If you're a small CSO working in rural Tanzania and what you really need is baseline data to situate your work in the context of the whole population, it's certainly not going to be worthwhile gathering a census of the whole country" —INGO Participant.

On data sharing, challenges in cooperation between institutions is a major barrier. The competitive value that data provides to organisations, as well as political will, makes data sharing extremely difficult. An INGO participant suggested that improved collaboration between institutions may require a shift in how stakeholders perceive data:

"people have a very different understanding of what data represents to the value of their organisation. And therefore, a very different starting point for how you think about exchanging data between institutions. If we're going to make the best of AI, then that has got to be a big part of the story" —INGO Participant. Similarly, a Tech MNC participant noted the need to think about data not in terms of what's owned but the data that exists, stressing the corresponding need to ensure representative datasets are openly available:

"If we really want to promote a more inclusive AI economy, open, high-quality datasets with equivalent representation of the Global South and Global North will be fundamental. A great example is the LLMs adaptation to local languages in the Global South" —Tech MNC Participant.

Technology companies note that often, less attention is paid to developing effective digital services, which is critical to maximise the impact of any infrastructure investments.

"Most international development agencies and banks still think about digital development as a layered stack of digital capabilities, without thinking of the end-to-end service", and **"[funding] is still very centred on data centres, hardware infrastructure, physical assets and not necessarily on digital services availability and digital development outcomes ... and that is quite limiting and misadjusted to the Cloud & AI economy I think, pushing countries in the wrong direction"** —Tech MNC participant.

They also believe more knowledge needs to be built around cloud infrastructure to leverage AI.

"Due to a misunderstanding about the risks of Cloud & AI adoption - namely in terms of security, privacy and sovereignty, which developed countries have overcome a long time ago - most low- and middle-income countries end up defaulting to outdated strategies and legacy systems that are just increasing their gap ... in terms of being able to tap into the opportunities of the new digital economy" —Tech MNC Participant.

So, what does this mean?

CSOs can identify when communities are excluded from data systems, or included without respect to rights or fair benefits, but often lack resources and platforms to catalyse action. Digital and data divides can only be closed through cross-sector efforts that stress equitable civic access.

- One emergent space where Global South CSOs can lead on is via citizen-led approaches to data collection.[63]
- Small language models (SLMs) are trained on smaller, more representative datasets, help navigate digital infrastructure constraints, build home-grown tools, and utilise local data.[64]
- With Kenya, Colombia and Ghanaian governments integrating citizen-generated data into their National Statistic Offices, country-owned practices and data-sharing agreements are growing.[65] There is hope for more citizen-led approaches ahead:

  "governments coming from a posture of quite a lot of suspicion relatively recently, to increasingly saying that [citizen-led data] is a valuable source of information...to now this is becoming institutionalised" —INGO Participant.

Tech MNCs

Support development

Advocate for investments in digital infrastructure to enable more inclusive participation in AI development.

Provide investments

Provide investment to global south regions and communities, supporting local capacity and infrastructure development without strings attached that foster extractive practices.

Remove barriers

Rethink the commercial model to reduce cost-related barriers for INGOs, including hosting, processing, and licensing fees during the initial stages of scaling.

INGOs & UN Agencies

Protect

Uphold data protection principles including data minimisation and follow guidance on adhering to international and domestic regulations in relation to AI.[66]

Launch responsibly

Ensure robust data ethics policies and data privacy mechanisms that staff know how to operationalise before launching AI projects.

Strengthen criteria

Establish strict criteria for testing use cases through pilots, considering factors like agency digital maturity, infrastructure and resource needs, deployment plans.

Join communities of practice

Avoid duplication of efforts by joining collaborative, information-sharing sectoral platforms.

Inform

Engage with Tech MNCs on the impact of exporting harmful data working practices to low-income countries and encourage measures to identify and eradicate specific practices.[67]

Assess conditional aid

Critically assess where personal data, e.g., biometrics are a condition of receiving aid considering the principle of informed consent.

CSOs

- **Educate on data**
- Support communities to better understand how to protect personal data and why.

- **Support initiatives**
- Consider engaging in citizen-led data initiatives.

- **Create sharing arrangements**
- CSOs can leverage citizen data to advocate for themselves, but also to build new public or private data sharing arrangements with practitioners in the 'AI for good' ecosystem – to directly feed into ground-up solutions.

- **Identify specifics**
- For tech-focused CSOs, consider highlighting community-specific digital infrastructural needs and data gaps.

Donors

- **Fund data capacities**
- Support capacity-building towards responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance in development settings, as outlined in the Global Digital Compact, to maximise the benefits of data use while protecting privacy and securing data.

- **Create momentum**
- Support similar efforts within international and national partner organisations, including emerging spaces for multi-stakeholder collaboration wherein civil society data divides and needs might be represented.[68]

- **Invest in digital infrastructure**
- Support national efforts to establish basic connectivity including via equitable private-public partnerships. Help overcome barriers to affordable technology by using international influence and support for regulation where appropriate.


Mark Malhotra / CARE

3.5 Considerations for Policymakers

Throughout the paper, considerations for Tech MNCs, INGOs and CSOs themselves have been raised. These range from increasing fluency with responsible AI tools and frameworks, to building mechanisms to better uncover local community needs, to exploring and further developing participatory practices in the AI lifecycle, to creating forums for stakeholders to find common ground, on equal footing.

All of this will require time and resources. Policymakers interested in supporting such efforts can take an ecosystem approach assessing, specifically, what support is required, and for whom, sensitive to the unique needs of each stakeholder. As CSOs often work with very limited resources, specific focus can be placed on how they might be empowered, financially and politically, to engage.

Given their vantage point, policymakers working at national and international levels can contextualise the findings of this report in relation to current and expected governmental and inter-governmental digital strategies. They can ensure enough funding is available for research and development activities, and plan how future funding and programming can spur local innovation and civic participation on this topic. This requires ensuring that CSOs are made aware of how to access government and other funding available to them, for example through proactive communications and user-friendly application processes, as well as making clear how CSOs can tap into policy agendas. This can be followed by ongoing support, for example, fostering linkages with academia or other subject matter experts who can support CSOs' work, as well as amplification of successful CSO initiatives.

Policymakers can also play a convening role. As they are in a unique position that allows them to communicate with all stakeholders, it follows that they are well placed to create spaces for shared dialogue and to incentivise all actors to engage. This should be complemented by thoughtful measures to ensure equal voice and participation across all participants. Once shared goals are identified, policymakers can create tailored incentives for each actor and develop appropriate success metrics to maximise the likeliness that goals are achieved. A comprehensive analysis of Global South AI regulation was beyond the scope of this report. Of course, the evolving AI regulatory landscape will mediate the ways in which policymakers proceed in these areas.

4.0 Conclusion

As AI technologies are rapidly advancing and being deployed, opportunities for Global South-based civil society participation is at a critical juncture.

Many priorities of Global South regions and communities are underrepresented in dominant governance debates and AI development. In humanitarian and development contexts, AI technology impacts the lives of vulnerable or marginalised people, making it vital that systems are informed by those who know local challenges best. Equally, if not guided by local insights, AI's enormous potential for human advancement is less likely to bear fruit.

This is a pivotal moment to involve CSOs and impacted communities in equitable multistakeholder dialogue, AI capacity building, and decision-making processes. Participatory and responsible AI practices are a central component in ensuring the promise of AI is fulfilled. CARE International and Accenture hope to use this report as a catalyst for further efforts, knowledge-sharing, and bringing diverse stakeholders together.

Peter Caton/CARE

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Executive Sponsors
Helen McEachern (CARE)
Jess Majekodunmi
Jill Huntley
Louise James
Lucy Murdoch

Programme Leads
Jessica Hyde
Suzanne Hickey

Project Leads
Amy Dunford-Stenger
John Carruthers

Project & Research Lead, Author
Suzy Madigan (CARE)

Research Leads & Authors
Charlotte O'Neill
Darragh Miller
Fergus Gleeson
Sabrina Anjara

Research Team
Dikshita Venkatesh
Elena El Ters
Hollyanne Smith
Lamiita Traista
Vaishnavi Prakash Lingayat

Creative Team
Ciara Wade
Patrick Feeney
Peter Crawley
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Research Scope and Approach

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from Global South-based civil society organisations (CSOs), international NGOs (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and technology multi-national corporations (Tech MNCs) in June and July 2024. CSOs were represented from 12 countries across Africa, Asia, Middle East and South America. The CSOs interviewed include both those who work in humanitarian and development contexts. As such, analysis in the report pertains to both settings. Reflecting the viewpoints represented, AI is understood as inherently neither 'good' nor 'bad', focusing instead on what is needed to enable greater civil society participation.

Research Limitations

Convenience sampling through CARE International and Accenture networks limits the generalisability of findings due to participants' different lived experiences and organisational contexts. Most researchers were based in the Global North, and the literature review relied on English-language sources. Despite efforts to minimise bias through diverse stakeholder reviews and ongoing self-evaluation, the findings likely reflect Global North perspectives. Additionally, power asymmetries between international organisations like Accenture and CARE International and civil society participants (e.g., differences in financial resources and access to AI technologies) may have influenced responses. While research design techniques were used to mitigate this, we acknowledge these limitations and hope this paper encourages more locally-led research in this field.

Algorithm

A sequence of rules that a computer uses to complete a task. An algorithm takes an input (e.g. a dataset) and generates an output (e.g. a pattern that it has found in the data). Algorithms underpin the technology that makes our lives tick, from smartphones and social media to sat nav and online dating, and they are increasingly being used to make predictions and support decisions in areas as diverse as healthcare, employment, insurance and law. Source: The Alan Turing Institute.

Algorithmic bias

Unfairness that can arise from problems with an algorithm's process or the way the algorithm is implemented, resulting in the algorithm inappropriately privileging or disadvantaging one group of users over another group. Algorithmic biases often result from biases in the data that has been used to train the algorithm, which can lead to the reinforcement of systemic prejudices around race, gender, sexuality, disability or ethnicity. Source: The Alan Turing Institute.

Artificial Intelligence

The design and study of machines that can perform tasks that would previously have required human (or other biological) brainpower to accomplish. AI is a broad field that incorporates many different aspects of intelligence, such as reasoning, making decisions, learning from mistakes, communicating, solving problems, and moving around the physical world. AI was founded as an academic discipline in the mid-1950s, and is now found in myriad everyday applications, including virtual assistants, search engines, navigation apps and online banking. Source: The Alan Turing Institute.

AI Lifecycle

The AI lifecycle is the iterative process of moving from identifying and understanding a problem to an AI solution that "solves" that problem. Each of the steps in the lifecycle is revisited many times throughout the design, development, and deployment phases. The design phase includes understanding the problem, data gathering and exploration, and data wrangling and preparation. The develop phase includes modelling and evaluation. The deploy phase includes moving to production and monitoring model output. Source: adapted from U.S. General Services Administration.

Data Colonialism

Echoing historical colonialism, the concept focuses on the extraction and appropriation of data as a valuable resource. Seen like this, it constitutes a renewed attempt to seize the world's resources for the benefit of elites, deepening global inequality. Source: adapted from Data Grab: an interview with Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias. Couldry, N. and Mejias, U.A..

Development Contexts

Where international Official Development Assistance in the form of government aid is provided to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. Source(s): adapted from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and United Nations Documentation Research Guides on Development.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI)

An artificial intelligence system that generates text, images, audio, video or other media in response to user prompts. It uses machine learning techniques to create new data that has similar characteristics to the data it was trained on, resulting in outputs that are often indistinguishable from human-created media. Source: The Alan Turing Institute.

Global South

The term 'Global South' (correlated with 'Global North') gained popular use among commentators on international politics in the post-colonial era to help describe geopolitical power relations and to group together countries with common positions on global issues. While it gained currency as a less pejorative label than 'Third World' or 'developing nations', the term remains problematic because there is no defined list of 'Global South' countries. Another limitation of the term is that it obscures the diversity of nations with vastly different histories, economies, politics, climates and interests. Source(s): adapted from What is the Global South?, Brooke-Holland, L. and The Term Global South is Surging. It Should be Retired. Patrick, S. and Huggins, A.

Humanitarian Contexts

Where international humanitarian assistance is required and specific actions are undertaken to provide immediate relief and protect human lives within a crisis, reducing risk, vulnerability and overall levels of need. Source: adapted from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is a broader term for Information Technology (IT), which refers to all communication technologies, including the internet, wireless networks, cell phones, computers, software, middleware, video-conferencing, social networking, and other media applications and services enabling users to access, retrieve, store, transmit, and manipulate information in a digital form. Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Participatory AI

Participatory artificial intelligence or participatory machine learning in their broadest sense refer to the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders than just technology developers in the creation of an AI system, model, tool, or application. As a field, it sits within the broader category of participatory design of technology. Source: Nesta.

Red-teaming

In cybersecurity, the practice of red-teaming implies an adversarial relationship with a system or network. A red-teamer's objective is to break into, hack, or simulate damage to a system in a way that emulates an actual attack. For an AI system, "red-teaming" might not involve actual "hacking". For example, one way to attack an LLM is to prompt it in a way that bypasses any restrictions or guardrails that its developers may have placed on it. When AI red-teaming is associated with prompt hacking, the focus tends to be more on AI safety (reducing harm caused by misuse or malfunction) than AI security (defending systems against malicious actors). Comprehensive AI testing and evaluation processes, need to ensure that they address both these categories of concern. Source: What does AI Red-Teaming Actually Mean?, Ji, J.

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