Beyond the Hype: Building Equitable and Sustainable AI for Social Impact

A WHITE PAPER AND PLEA FROM COMMITTED SOCIAL INNOVATORS WITH FIELD-PROVEN EXPERIENCE

April 3rd, 2025 - Paris / Kigali : **On the occasion of the Global AI Summit on Africa, non-profit Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (Libraries Without Borders), its social business Kajou, and the AI Lab Pleias are releasing call to action for governments, private sector stakeholders, and civil society to promote ethical, sustainable, and culturally inclusive artificial intelligence.**

"AI risks becoming a luxury out of reach for the less well-off," said Jérémy Lachal, CEO at Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (BSF) and Chairman of Kajou, speaking from the Global AI Summit on Africa.*"Through this white paper, we advocate for frugal, offline, and open AI models that respect cultural diversity and empower communities — especially in low-resource countries."*

Launched within the framework of the Ideas AI initiative by BSF, this publication, offers crucial insights and six concrete recommendations on how to ensure that AI technologies benefit underserved communities and do not widen the global digital divide:

1. Frugal, sustainable and offline AI: invest in offline, affordable, and resource-efficient AI to foster equitable access.

2. Linguistic and cultural inclusion: fund open-source NLP tools for underrepresented languages to ensure diversity and fairness.

3. Ethical AI governance: mandate human oversight to respect rights and community values.

4. Open-source transparency: prioritize transparent, open-source AI models and datasets for accountability and community adaptation.

5. Inclusive evaluation metrics: adopt culturally relevant benchmarks prioritizing fairness and accessibility alongside accuracy.

6. Build local capacity: support local AI education, entrepreneurship, and research in LMICs to sustain innovation.

This white paper draws on the field experience of its authors, including AI-based solutions for teacher professional development, language learning, community health worker training, and conflict-related sexual violence prevention in countries such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

BSF and Kajou bring extensive experience in deploying frugal, innovative tools such as local microservers and microSD cards — which provide access to knowledge without the need for an Internet connection.

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COME MEET US!
Global AI Summit on Africa: 3&4 April in Kigali, Rwanda
Change Now Summit: 25 April in Paris, France
eLearning Africa: 7>9 May, Dar-es-Salaam,Tanzanie

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Since 2007, Bibliothèques Sans Frontières has been working to make knowledge accessible to all. Through its solidarity-driven initiatives, the organization turns culture, education, and information into powerful tools for resistance, resilience, and empowerment. With innovative solutions, a vast library of content available in over 27 languages, and recognized expertise in community engagement, BSF reaches people in crisis zones, development settings, and areas marked by deep inequality across some thirty countries, including France.
www.librarieswithoutborders.org

Kajou is a technology company specializing in mobile learning and digital solutions for social impact. We partner with organizations to develop and deploy innovative applications and platforms that address critical challenges in education, health, and economic development. Kajou's expertise lies in creating user-friendly, accessible e-learning content and technologies that can be effectively implemented in low-resource environments, often leveraging mobile devices and offline capabilities to reach underserved communities.
www.kajou.io

Pleias specializes in the development of large language models (LLMs) with advanced reasoning capabilities for information-intensive and highly regulated industries. Their approach emphasizes AI compliance, open scientific models and multilingual support to meet diverse industry needs. They focus on the creation of high-quality synthetic data, the development of corpus mining pipelines for untapped data sources, and the integration of semantic data for enhanced AI applications. The founding team is made up of experts affiliated with the Sorbonne's Artificial Intelligence Center and Sciences Po's Médialab, known for their pioneering LLM assistantships and contributions to open access research.
www.pleias.fr