

# How can responsible AI advance progress towards the UN SDGs?



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AI can add speed, scale and impact to efforts to solve humanity's most urgent problems while building a more sustainable and inclusive future.

## Three questions to ask:

- ▶ How will responsible AI advance progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
- ▶ How will AI unlock solutions to the biggest environmental challenges?
- ▶ How will AI help social innovators go further, faster to address inequity

The EY organization believes in the power of responsible artificial intelligence (AI) to support people and communities and help the planet to thrive. The responsible use of AI unlocks unprecedented opportunities for social impact and is key to achieving the EY Ripples ambition of positively impacting one billion lives by 2030.

AI can be interwoven into the EY approach to solutions, addressing a spectrum of challenges facing humanity. It is not a singular solution but is meant to complement broader systems change. But AI's potential to create positive human impacts and accelerate sustainable outcomes can only be fully realized if stakeholders have confidence in AI as an exponential technology for good, rather than experiencing it as an accelerator of unsustainable practices. Confidence in AI will also be built by transparently reporting on the net impacts of the technology.

For the global EY organization, the goal is to identify and seize responsible AI opportunities that scale social impact and advance progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our AI for Social Impact strategy combines EY Ripples, Responsible AI, and EY.ai to help accelerate progress towards the UN SDGs in three areas:

- ▶ AI for social innovation
- ▶ AI for education
- ▶ AI for the environment

By coming together with like-minded organizations to develop, scale and share responsible AI, we are helping accelerate social impact for people, communities and the planet.

## Chapter 1

### AI for social innovation

#### Equipping and helping empower social innovators with the tools and knowledge to harness AI to rapidly scale proven impact solutions.

Impact entrepreneurs are playing a pivotal role in driving positive, grassroots change - especially in communities that are often overlooked. Their work is instrumental in ensuring that technological advances translate into equitable and sustainable progress for society at large. AI has the potential to be a powerful force to help impact entrepreneurs scale new and existing solutions and drive operational efficiencies to extend the reach of social initiatives.

#### Driving knowledge and insights to enable the AI for social innovation ecosystem

At the 2024 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, the global EY organization came together with social innovators, other private sector stakeholders and technology organizations to launch the **AI for Social Innovation initiative**, hosted by the Schwab Foundation's Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship, co-initiated by Microsoft and supported by the EY organization.

We also collaborated with Microsoft, the World Economic Forum and the Schwab Foundation's Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship to produce a series of white papers. These **landmark papers** map the current landscape across the globe and highlight case studies of innovators and the supporting ecosystem at the forefront of driving the deployment of AI for social impact; as well as introducing the PRISM framework, presenting a strategic roadmap for social innovators assessing how to ethically include AI in their operations or models.

#### Supporting female impact entrepreneurs

According to recent assessments by the **United Nations Statistics Division**, indicators used to measure progress toward SDG 5 - to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - are significantly off track from the 2030 targets. Increasing the number of women at the forefront of AI design and development will be a significant step forward. But we cannot be what we cannot see. We need to support women to reskill and upskill in AI and educate, inspire and encourage women to seek out AI-related roles.

As part of the **Technovation AI Forward Alliance**, led by Technovation, teams are providing mentoring and coaching to support 25 million girls and young women through AI, coding and entrepreneurship education. The program aims to help create a generation of female leaders and innovators capable of tackling complex global challenges through unique skill sets and digitally-native innovation. Our shared goal is to see six million of these young women enter the workforce in tech-related fields by 2030.

#### Empowering social innovators to harness and scale AI solutions

Impact entrepreneurs are an important driver to make sure that AI is becoming a force for positive social change. By extending the knowledge of EY teams and collaborating with leading organizations, we can support impact entrepreneurs to harness the potential of AI and scale their existing groundbreaking AI solutions.

The EY organization provides not-for-profit professional services as well as a variety of skills development and coaching programs for impact entrepreneurs. This year we launched the **AI SDG Accelerator**, supporting pioneering AI solutions aimed at driving significant progress towards achieving the SDGs through a portfolio of pro bono services. Our first cohort, in collaboration with Microsoft, Acumen and Meaningful Business, supported selected impact entrepreneurs using AI to advance action towards SDG 4: Quality Education. At EY, we recognize that Quality Education will be crucial to help in creating a more sustainable future and address inequalities around the world.

The technology itself offers increased opportunities for generating ideas and receiving instant feedback. GenAI tools that offer immediate feedback offer students access to an unparalleled breadth of information beyond what a single educator can typically provide.

AI can also give students greater access to adaptive technologies, which empower young people with disabilities through speech recognition, text-to-speech options and the ability to set their own pace. In addition, just as the internet has opened borders and deepened opportunities for global fellowship, AI promises to enable international collaboration unhampered by language, cultural, and geographic differences.

#### Training teachers to deploy and deliver AI in the classroom

EY teams are working with TeachAI to support educators to teach with and about AI. The TeachAI initiative guides policy increases awareness and builds community and capacity to help education leaders and policymakers understand and act on the implications of AI in education. In addition, through EY's continued collaboration with Teach For All, we are providing guidance on a GenAI curriculum framework, as well as participating in video interviews with EY professionals working in AI field, to be shared with a network of 15,000 teachers across the globe.

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#### STRATEGY CONSULTING

EY-Parthenon professionals recognize that CEOs and business leaders are tasked with achieving maximum value for their organizations' stakeholders in this transformative age. We challenge assumptions to design and deliver strategies that help improve profitability and long-term value.

Our purpose is building a better working world. It starts with better questions. The better the question. The better the answer. The better the world works. Please send an email to [isaac.sarpong@gh.ey.com](mailto:isaac.sarpong@gh.ey.com) and copy in [kofi.akuoko@gh.ey.com](mailto:kofi.akuoko@gh.ey.com)

## Chapter 2

### AI for education

#### Bridging learning gaps by delivering quality education to underserved cohorts, improving accessibility and personalizing learning.

AI will have a transformative impact on the future of education, creating a pressing need for updated curriculum standards, courses, tools and assessments to prepare students for an age of AI.

#### About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, strategy and transaction and consultancy services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, clients and for our communities.

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(Continued from previous edition)

We are also supporting teachers and students by providing AI-training through our skills-based volunteering efforts. The **EY Future Skills Workshops** transform the skills, knowledge and experience of EY professionals by facilitating engaging and fun content on a variety of topics. Our newest module, "All about AI", is geared towards youth aged 11-18 and provides students with an introduction to AI concepts (including real-world application and ethical considerations) to prepare them for the future of work. Additionally, students learn how to exercise critical thinking when leveraging AI and discover career opportunities that use AI technology. This initiative not only educates but also inspires the next generation to be innovators in a world where AI plays an increasingly significant role.

## Empowering social ventures to upskill the workforce to use generative AI (GenAI)

As part of our **collaboration with data.org**, EY teams are offering capacity-building workshops and coaching to support awardee organizations of the Generative AI Skills Challenge in scaling their mission. The initiative aims to strengthen the use of GenAI across impact organizations, NGOs and their beneficiaries. This effort aligns with data.org's commitment to training one million purpose-driven data practitioners by 2032, underscoring our shared dedication to leveraging AI for social impact.

## Teaching and mentoring girls in AI skills

The global EY organization and the ITU have joined forces to implement the **AI skills accelerator for girls**, addressing the challenge of ensuring female

access to the latest and emerging trends in technology. This program will benefit girls and women, particularly from marginalized and underserved communities, by providing them with the necessary digital, ethical, and managerial skills to become content creators, and to boost creativity and innovation in solving challenges at the community level using AI. Over two years, 1,000 girls and young women in 12 countries will be trained at in-person workshops where they will receive knowledge, mentoring and expert support, including from EY professionals, to develop solutions for their communities.

Recognizing that there is a large gap in access to AI learning content, EY teams have collaborated with text-based learning provider **Arist** to create text-based content on AI and STEM for young women aged 18+ globally. The content will be bite-sized modules that will be delivered to students via text message or WhatsApp where students will be able to receive vital STEM education information straight to their phones. In just one month, over 1,000 young women completed the "All about AI" module.

## Chapter 3

### AI for the environment

**Supporting climate change modelling, deforestation monitoring and energy management to inform and accelerate decarbonization initiatives.**

**Using data to track and mitigate the effects of climate change**

Current biodiversity monitoring is fragmented and often inconsistent. Monitoring efforts face

multiple challenges including insufficient technical and human capacity, and data unavailability. AI can aggregate and standardize data from diverse sources, creating a unified and coherent dataset for biodiversity monitoring. Machine learning algorithms can process data from satellite imagery, camera traps, acoustic sensors, and citizen science reports, ensuring consistency and enabling comprehensive analysis.

Since 2007, EY professionals have participated in citizen science projects through the people-powered research platform, **Zooniverse**. This year, we are continuing mass participation in citizen science projects through Snapshot Safari, a Zooniverse project using machine learning models to improve efficiency of data classifications, ensuring the protection and proliferation of African mammals.

## Supporting AI-led sustainability ventures

In collaboration with Bright Tide and Microsoft, EY launched a cohort of the **AI SDG Accelerator**, targeting regenerative agriculture, which offers a transformative approach to addressing climate change, nurturing soil health, sequestering carbon and fostering biodiversity - in the process bringing us closer to achieving the first 10 SDGs. The program aims to expedite the shift toward regenerative agriculture practices by empowering farmers and others in the agriculture value chain with the AI tools they need to make data-driven decisions and improve both their efficiency and resilience in the face of climate change. EY teams are providing coaching, technical and business guidance, networking and pitching opportunities to help ventures tackle challenges and scale their mission.

## Conclusion

When used ethically and responsibly, the social effects of AI can be a catalyst for positive change. As we look towards 2030, the impact of these efforts will be measured not just in numbers, but in the improved quality of life for individuals and communities around the globe. The EY vision of impacting one billion lives is ambitious, yet with the strategic application of AI for good, it is a goal that is increasingly within reach. The journey ahead is one of continuous learning, adaptation, and partnership to inspire a generation of responsible AI-driven social impact.

## Summary

AI holds great promise to enable sustainable growth and empower people and society to build a better working world. Through a global AI for Social Impact strategy, EY organization is addressing global development issues, using responsible AI equitably to educate, to advance social innovation and to help the environment.

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