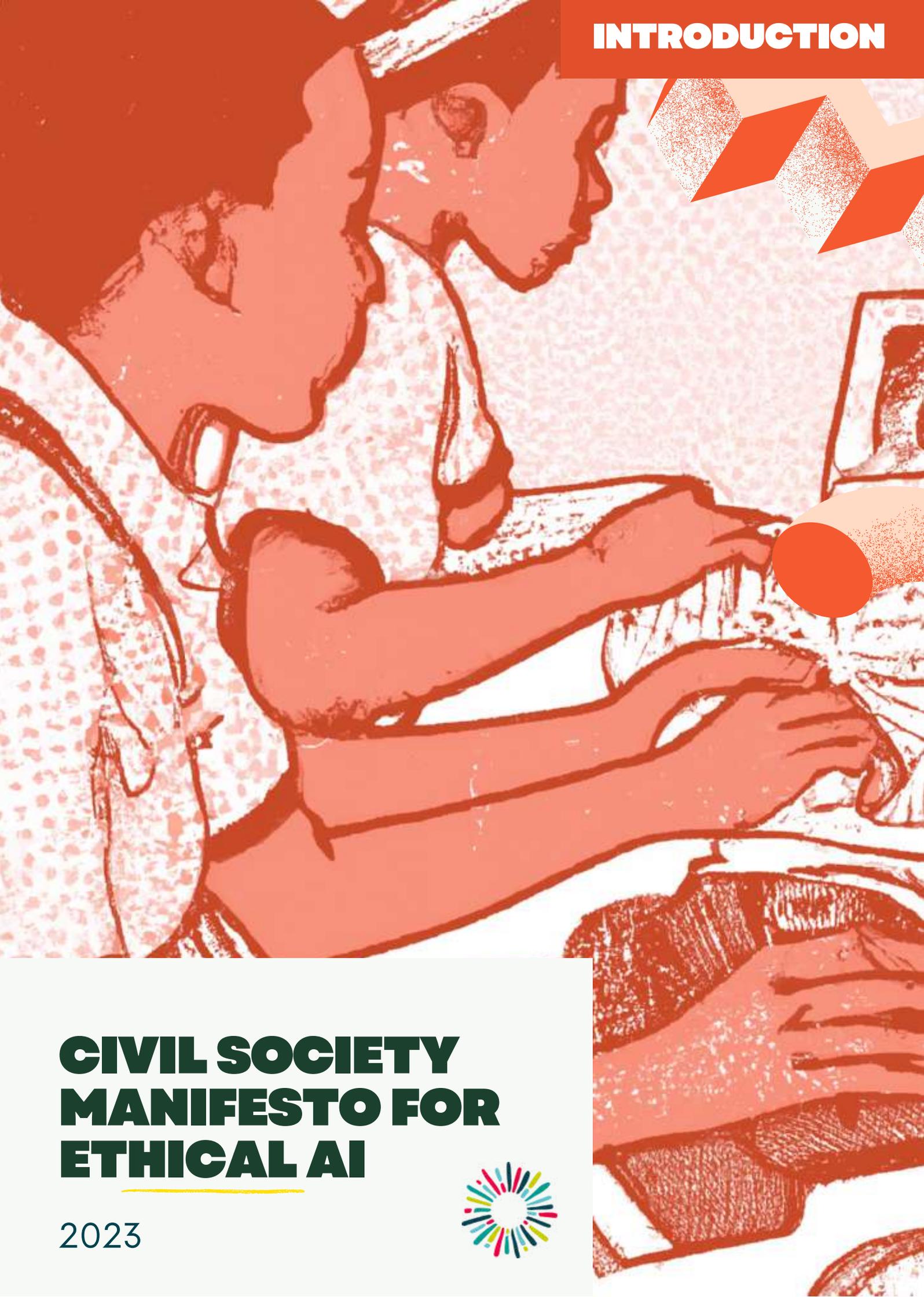
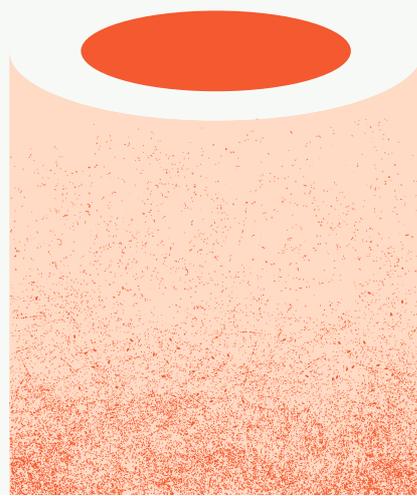
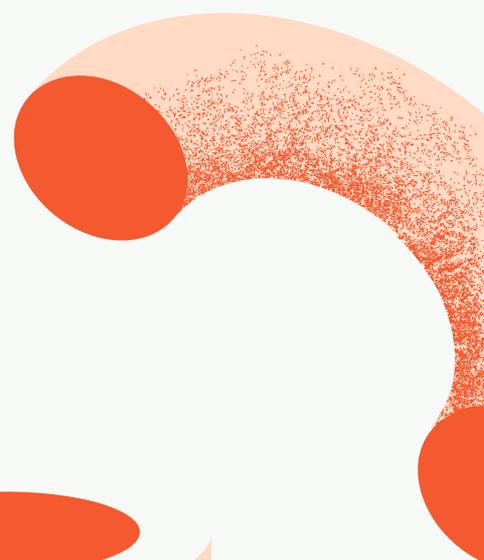
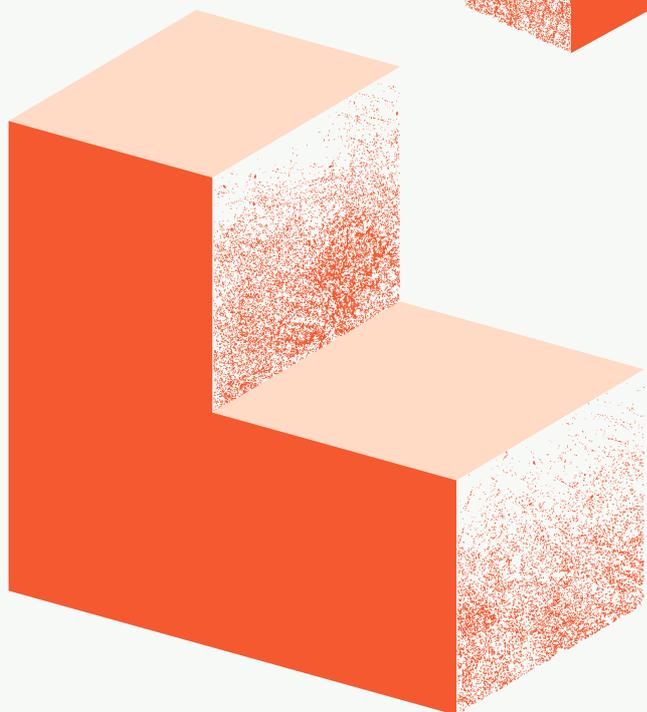
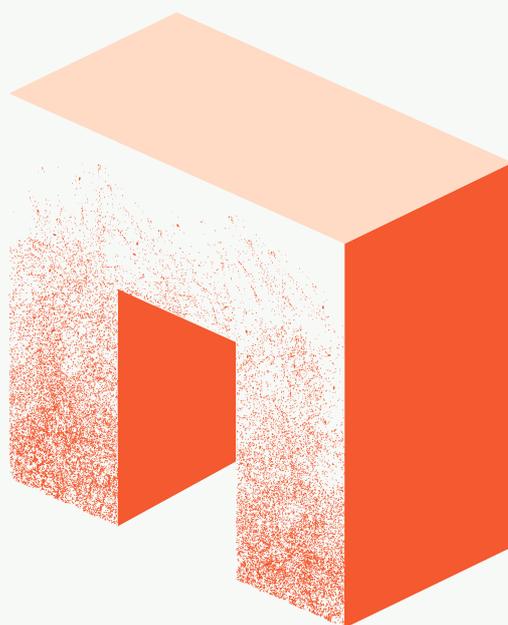
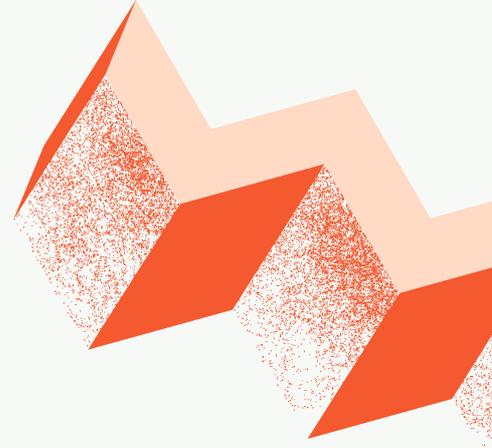
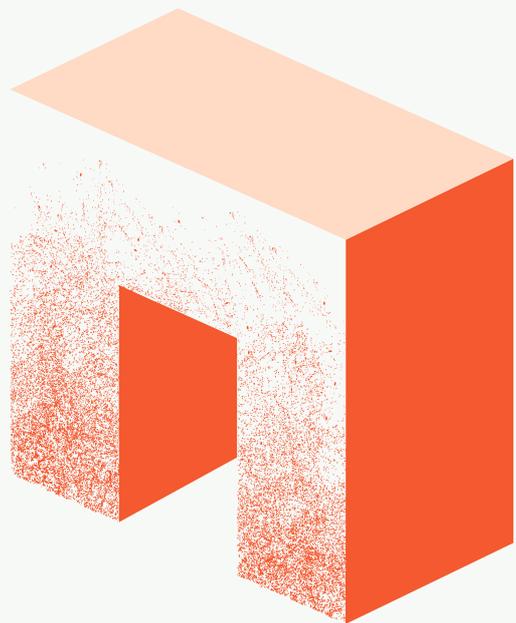


**CIVIL SOCIETY  
MANIFESTO FOR  
ETHICAL AI**

2023





# INTRODUCTION



## A message to our readers

The Civil Society Manifesto for Ethical AI is more than just a static document; it's a dynamic project that goes beyond words. It encompasses a tapestry of in-person roundtables, discussions, and storytelling from civil society organizations worldwide. It is our contribution to the multiple and diverse efforts of civil society organisations, human rights activists and tech experts to change the approach and narratives around AI and machine learning.

## The origins of this Manifesto

Why Create a Civil Society Manifesto for Ethical AI? Because the narratives and insights of civil society organizations regarding AI development and utilization have often been marginalized in discussions. In the following pages, you will encounter not only a collection of recommendations but also narratives, experiences, and aspirations for a future where technological progress is a topic of shared discourse, rather than the concern of a select few.

## WHO AND WHAT

40+

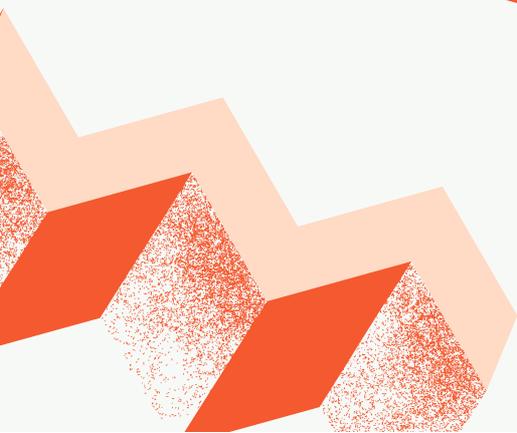
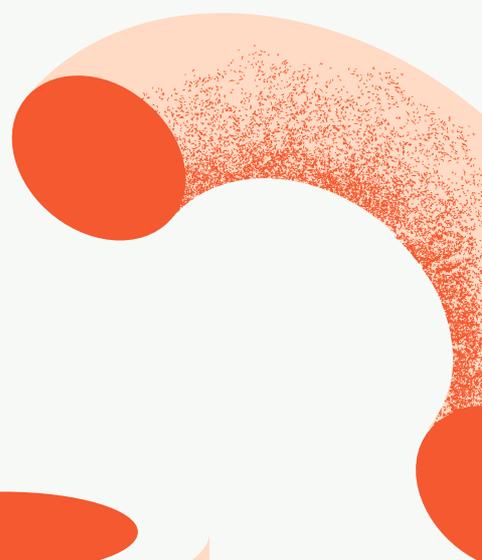
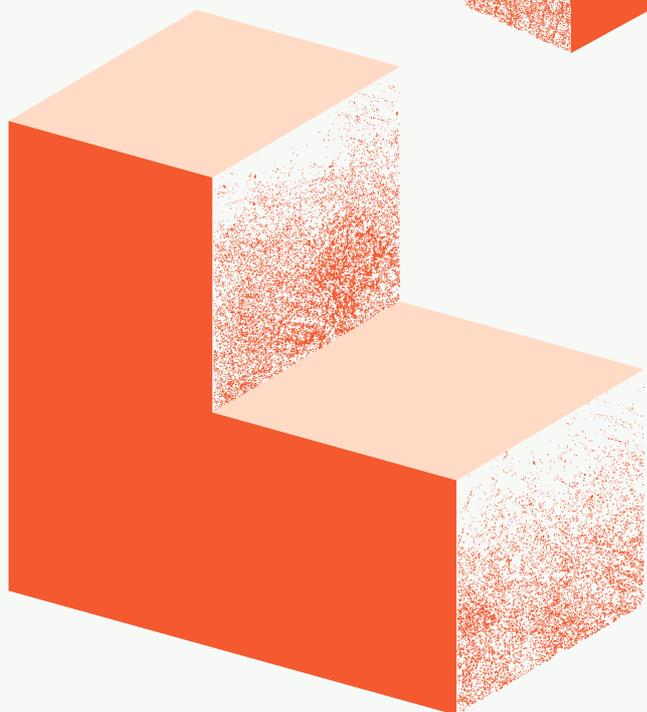
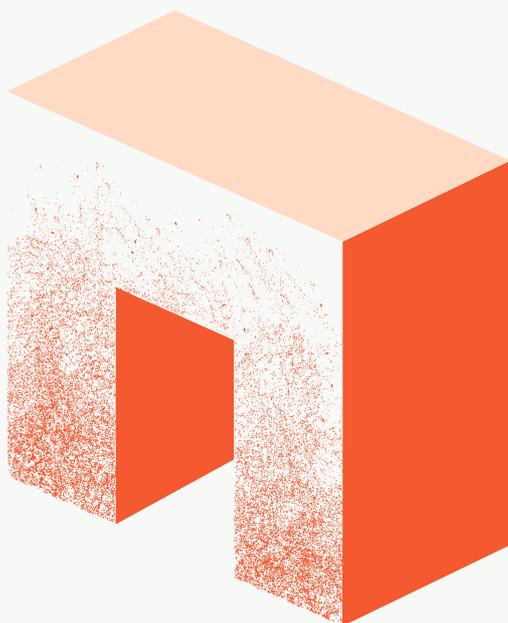
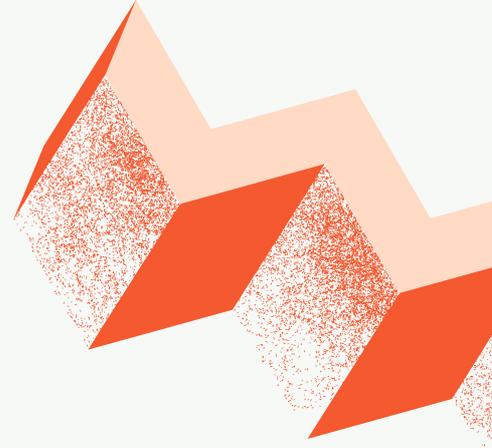
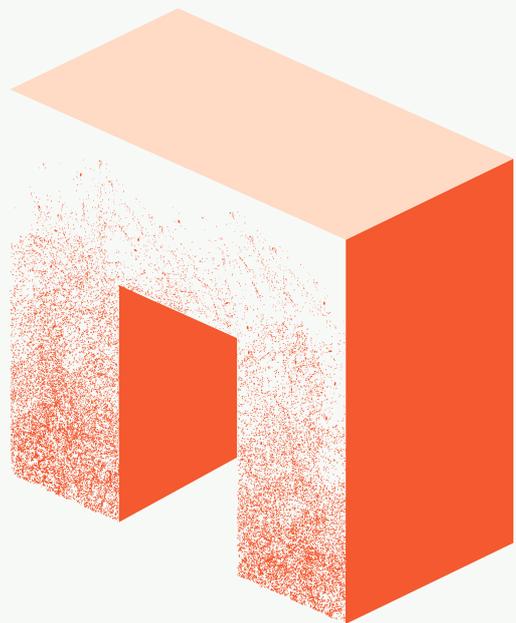
Civil society organisations and activists

17

Case studies and articles

30+

Countries



# BEGINNINGS

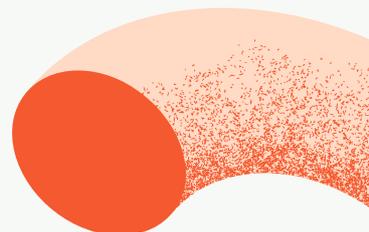
In April 2021, [the European Commission](#) introduced the world's "first rules on AI," proposing the initial EU regulatory framework for AI. Fast forward to 2023 and the [the European Parliament adopted its negotiating position on the AI Act](#), the U.S. a blueprint for an AI [Bill of Rights](#), [Brazil developed a draft AI Law](#), [Canada an Algorithmic Impact Assessments Tool](#) and [Costa Rica an AI Law proposal](#). However, numerous countries and regions worldwide still lack any form of regulation concerning AI and the utilization of innovative technology.

The [questions surrounding AI outnumber the answers](#): How can we ensure that AI systems are safe, rights-based, transparent, traceable, non-discriminatory, accountable and environmentally friendly?

As civil society organizations, acting as intermediaries between governments and communities, we are already experiencing profound effects of AI. From Hong Kong to Belarus to Chile, we have witnessed firsthand the existence and manifestation of AI technologies in the real world. Activists and frontline defenders have suffered abuses as a result of AI technologies, ranging from facial recognition, predictive analytics to other forms of data collection and biases, as documented by recent [UN reports](#) and [special procedures](#).

Simultaneously, various machine learning models are aiding in detecting risks to civic space, and numerous activists and technology experts are investing in ["ethical"](#) or ["responsible" AI](#) to mitigate associated risks and support the work of civil society organizations.

Drawing upon initiatives such as the [Decolonial AI Manifesto](#) and the [EU Artificial Intelligence Act for Fundamental Rights](#), this Civil Society Manifesto for AI represents a collaborative effort to advise policymakers on the risks and opportunities of AI specifically for civil society organizations and its impact on their work.



It brings together diverse voices, including those of indigenous peoples, youth, women, and human right defenders. The manifesto acknowledges the various impacts AI is having on communities and offers recommendations on building a decolonial, fair, accessible AI that can expand rather than restrict civic space worldwide.

The manifesto, developed by a group of over 50 organizations from 30+ countries, will be presented and its messages will be followed up at national, regional, and international levels. This collective effort aims to engage in advocacy and capacity strengthening activities to ensure the document's impact.

We begin with the assumption of researchers and activists, who argue that AI is a product of historical data representing inequities and inequalities. If we utilize current AI systems as a basis for decision-making regarding the future, there is the risk of perpetuating existing inequities.

While we appreciate the ongoing efforts to foster inclusivity in AI, we also acknowledge that the discourse surrounding AI, like the technology itself, has predominantly been shaped by “Western, whiteness, and wealth”. Our objective is to not only explore, challenge, disrupt, and reimagine the underlying assumptions within this discourse but also to broaden the discussion to incorporate communities beyond the traditional "experts."

We recognize that the lives, work, and future of various groups, such as young people, those impacted by the environmental consequences of AI, and individuals affected by its racial and gender biases, will be significantly influenced. In the subsequent pages, they will present their unique perspectives on AI, offering their own interpretations and understandings of the concept, policies and practices.

We are currently at a critical juncture where most countries lack a comprehensive AI policy or regulatory framework. However, several initiatives have been undertaken to promote safer AI adoption and address potential risks associated with the technology.

The sudden reliance on AI and other digital technologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new vulnerabilities, allowing citizens' data to be commercialized and even weaponized. Consequently, issues such as algorithmic bias, privacy breaches, lack of transparency, and the overall complexity of understanding AI interactions require policy considerations.

It is crucial to inform AI policies that approach the extent of reliance on AI systems critically, particularly in public sectors.

Ultimately, because of its strategic role and responsibilities, civil society possesses the potential to steer AI in a positive direction. By promoting accountability and elevating the voices of historically marginalized communities who have been overlooked, we believe that this collective manifesto will contribute to achieving these goals.

## THE PROCESS

The process of crafting the Civil Society Manifesto for AI begun at the [Digital Rights Asia-Pacific 2023 Assembly \(DRAPAC\)](#), held in Chiang Mai in May 2023. This collaborative endeavor was initiated through a roundtable discussion organized by Forus, a global civil society network, in collaboration with the Asia Development Alliance, European Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ECNL), the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), and the Asia Center. Over 50 civil society organisations gathered online and offline to explore the risks and opportunities associated with AI and its applications.

Subsequently, a virtual global workshop was conducted to delve deeper into these topics with diverse testimonials from civil society organizations, including Paradigm Initiative, the Uganda National NGO Forum, Red Unitas from Bolivia, the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and initiatives such as [Machine Learning for Peace](#) project from the University of Pennsylvania. The workshop aimed to foster collective discussions and share personal experiences regarding AI's impact on the operations and working environment of civil society organizations. The workshop was followed by an interactive session as part of the Tech for Democracy Advisory Group meeting.

The organizations and activists involved in these initiatives formed the constituting body responsible for developing the Civil Society Manifesto for AI, a collaborative writing process that spanned over six months. We believe that this somewhat varied and unstructured format better mirrors the early and evolving nature of this discussion, while also ensuring that the reader remains cognizant of the wide array of perspectives articulated during this collective process.

# LIST OF ORGANISATIONS

**AIPP** / Asia-Pacific

**Alianza ONG** / Dominican Republic

**Association INFO-COM 'Jeunes de Guelma** / Algeria

**Act Church of Sweden** / Sweden

**Asia Development Alliance** / Asia

**Asociación Chilena Pro Naciones Unidas (ACHNU)** / Chile

**Balkan Civil Society Development Network** / The Balkans

**Both Nomads** / Belgium

**Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG)** / Brazil

**CCOAIB** / Rwanda

**CNONGD** / Democratic Republic of Congo

**CONCORD Europe** / Europe

**Connect Humanity** / USA

**Creativity Lab for Empowerment and Innovation** / Palestine

**DanChurchAid (DCA)** / Denmark

**Machine Learning for Peace** / USA

**Digital Grassroots** / Global

**ECNL** / Europe

**EDRi** / Europe

**Feminist Humanitarian Network**

**Fingo** / Finland

**FONGTO** / Togo

**Forus** / Global

**Fundapi** / Ecuador

**Guinée juristes** / Guinea

**IDAY Liberia Coalition Inc.** / Liberia

**Hitesh Bhatt** / India

**Jalpa Patel** / India

**Jun-E Tan** / Malaysia

**Instituto para el Futuro Común Amerindio**

**IFCA** / Latin America

**Kq Hub Afrika** / Uganda

**Lafede.cat** / Spain

**MAKAIA** / Colombia

**National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal** / Nepal

**Nigeria Network of NGOs** / Nigeria

**Nyéléni** - The International food sovereignty movement / Global

**Oxfam** / Global

**Paradigm Initiative** / Nigeria

**PFNOSCM** / Madagascar

**Public Organization "Dawn"** / Tajikistan

**REPONGAC** / Central Africa

**Sask** / Finland

**UDYAMA** / India

**Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)** / Uganda

**Unitas** / Bolivia



# WHAT WILL YOU FIND IN THE MANIFESTO?



Introduction



List of organisations  
involved in the  
Manifesto



6 Facts about AI



10 Recommendations  
for Ethical AI



17 Case studies,  
articles,  
experiences



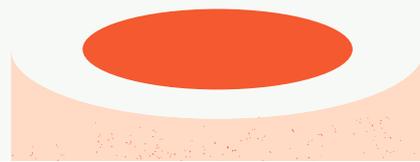
Resources on AI  
and civil society



Call to Action.  
Join the Manifesto



Acknowledgements





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**“DIGITAL EXCLUSION IN  
TODAY’S WORLD IS  
ECONOMIC EXCLUSION,  
POLITICAL EXCLUSION,  
AND SOCIAL  
EXCLUSION.”**

# NEXT STEPS



## Join the launch

Join us on December 6 to discuss the stories, visions and recommendations of the Civil Society Manifesto for Ethical AI in various languages! The meeting will benefit from simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish.

[Register here.](#)



## Share your story

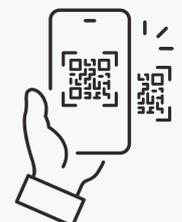
Would you like to share your experience and resources on AI? We are developing a digital, interactive & multilingual platform open to contributions.

If you would like to join, sign up to the [Manifesto here.](#)

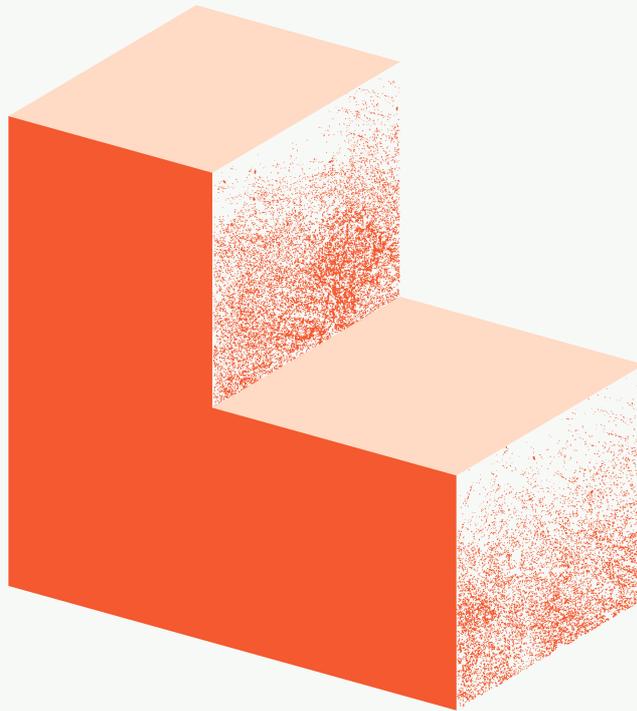
## FOR MORE INFORMATION



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# Civil society Manifesto For Ethical AI



Forus is a member-led network of 68 National NGO Platforms and 7 Regional Coalitions from all continents representing over 22,000 NGOs active locally and internationally on development, human rights and environmental issues.



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*Interviews carried out by Bibbi Abruzzini and Clarisse Sih - Forus.*

