

Big Data and AI in the Global South

ABSTRACT

Recently Big Data and AI, among other data-driven applications, are becoming increasingly popular in the Global South. Research works have shown that the challenges of developing and deploying Big Data- and AI- based systems in the Global South are different from those in the North due to sociocultural norms, infrastructural limits, colonial histories, and continuing oppressions and social stratification based on race/caste/tribe, among others. In this workshop, we invite researchers across the world who investigate and contend with these challenges. The objectives of this workshop are to identify the challenges of AI and Big Data in the Global South, come up with designs, policies, and methods to develop a decolonizing praxis in this area, connect with existing scholarship in HCI4D and AI4SG, and develop an active HCI community to advance these goals.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **Collaborative and social computing**; • **Social and professional topics**;

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2 MOTIVATIONS, GOALS AND THEMES

2.1 Motivation

The United Nations, World Bank, and many international development organizations provide financing and infrastructural support for data-driven interventions such as digital identity projects across the Global South and help diminish the global digital divide [13, 25, 28]. These interventions create opportunities so that developing countries and marginalized populations can potentially take advantage of ongoing efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals [28]. Such interventions often include Big Data and artificial intelligence (AI) based models and may further exacerbate many existing forms of inequalities and produce emergent forms of injustice [1, 4, 15, 21, 22, 29, 34]. Reports have shown that these systems often function erroneously that make them unreliable to people, the complex methods in decision-making processes are reportedly unexplainable, and the values integrated in intelligent systems are often mismatched with the cultural norms of the users in the Global South [2, 3, 10, 16, 17, 24, 32, 33, 39, 41, 42]. Artificial intelligence for social good (AI4SG) and human-computer interaction for development (HCI4D) researchers often look into the above-mentioned issues associated with developing countries and marginalized populations, and how these problems are created and influenced by – and could be addressed by – data-driven systems, Big Data, AI and other forms of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Therefore, an emerging body of literature investigates algorithmic fairness, locality and race-based inequality and injustice, and the user-centric and value-centric design of data-driven systems and AI [12, 18, 20, 30, 32, 33, 42, 43]. This chain of works motivate us to engage more in this discussion.

2.2 Goals

We build on the AI4SG and HCI4D literature, along with our lived experiences in the Global South and set two major goals for the workshop. We discuss them below:

- Bringing together a community of HCI researchers and practitioners from different domains and interested in AI, Big Data and marginalized populations in the Global South to make connections, share ideas and experiences, and redefine the scope of AI and Big Data research by identifying further gaps in these fields from Global South perspectives.
- Coming up with designs, policies, and other ways to address AI coloniality in the Global South and unpacking the validity and relevance of the current methods and techniques used in AI- and Big Data-related practices in the Global South and how they can possibly jeopardize real-world impact.

2.3 Themes

The workshop will focus on the following key themes that are crucial to advance AI and Big Data research in Global South contexts:

2.3.1 Missing History. Many AI4SG and HCI4D works in the Global South take existing recorded history into account while theorizing and designing to address the problems of marginalized communities. However, many subaltern historians, social scientists, and critical thinkers often point out that such recorded history was reposed by people who were socially more powerful, literate, wealthy, and influential than marginalized communities [11, 14, 31, 37]. Therefore, such recorded history often neglects the past and voices of subalterns, especially in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. For example, Prathama Banerjee and Ashish Nandy pointed out that the recorded history of South

Asia based on objectivity and empirical worldviews; sidelined myths, legends, epics, and other forms of local cultural elements; and therefore missed the voices of the most prominent Adivasi and indigenous communities (e.g. Santals) [5, 6, 27]. Many AI4SG and HCI4D scholarships have addressed such critiques in historiography and other types of “data distortions” [32]. We build on subaltern scholarship and existing AI4SG and HCI4D literature and invite the workshop participants to discuss why and how the historical data is bound to be biased and reproduces systematic violence against the oppressed communities and how we can advance AI and HCI in this regard.

2.3.2 Whose Ethics. We also want to join the discourse of “ethics in AI” and ask “whose ethics are we talking about?” Building on Sambasivan et al’s and other recent works [32, 41, 43], we would highlight that much of today’s discussions on “ethics in AI” is centered on the Western/European/American ethics that are not always compatible in non-Western cultures. However, many Global South communities refuse to accept and adopt western ethics in the design of their daily life artifacts and practices. For example, Sultana et al. reported that many female victims of domestic violence in rural Bangladesh prefer not to leave the household for good or handover their abuser to police, rather they, together with local witches, find local situated solutions to their problems [38, 40]. Also, many communities in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia rely more on faith-based wellbeing practices [7, 8, 19, 23, 26, 35]. Such discussions on ethics is also being discussed in data science and algorithmic justice [9]. We will build on this literature and explore how ethical perspectives from Global South contexts can help establish a broader framework to think about ethical AI, Big Data and data-driven applications.

2.3.3 Infrastructural Politics of and Everyday Experiences with Big Data and AI. Moving from the designers to people who become subject to data-driven practices in the practices of using these digital technologies (or data subjects), we will turn our attention to the emerging conditions of living with data and AI. We will discuss how data-driven interventions tend to continue transnational colonial practices [16] and explore everyday life in a data-driven world under the shadow of large-scale government projects like Aadhaar [36], foreign-aid driven “development” projects [39, 41], and platforms that facilitate gig work [10, 24]. We will extend this discussion by presenting challenges of infrastructuring data into everyday lives of data subjects and asking how to decolonize data-driven systems when they are built on racial capitalism and coloniality that is in practice today? What kind of work can be done through data-driven systems in the much broader, global task of decolonization that requires radical thinking, differing epistemologies, histories, etc? While many indigenous scholars, post-colonial Africanists, and South Asian and Latin American activists speaks of decolonization, how do we address them and undertake long-term visions within HCI and computing worlds?

3 WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

This will be an **virtual interactive workshop** where some presenters will present their works and thoughts and other participants will discuss them further. In this **3-hrs workshop**, we plan to recruit approximately **30 participants**. We expect out participants to join many parts of the world and we will use our **institutional Zoom rooms** for the workshop (if needed) and will utilize digital collaboration tools (e.g., Miro Boards, Google Doc) where each group will document their work and online attendees can interact with and provide their input. Moreover, a Slack channel will be also used as a virtual space to facilitate asynchronous and synchronous communication. Some of this workshop’s co-organizers have experience in organizing and facilitating online conferences and have attended several virtual conferences and workshops.

We will ask all presenters to record 3-minute videos of their presentations with closed captions (for accessibility) and send them to us prior to the workshop day. Moreover, a week before the workshop, we will send an email to the

Time (in KST)	Activity
4:00 - 4:30	Greetings and Preparing to kick-off #1
4:30 - 4:40	Welcoming notes and opening keynote #1
4:40 - 4:50	Opening keynote #2
4:50 - 5:25	Participants' Presentations #1
5:25 - 6:00	Q&A with presenters and organizers:
6:00 - 6:30	Break
6:30 - 7:10	Participants' Presentations #2
7:10 - 7:30	Q&A with presenters and organizers:
7:30 - 7:50	Discussion on further advancement, What is next
7:50 - 8:00	Closing remarks

Table 1. Proposed Schedule of the Workshop

workshop participants asking them to complete three shared documents: (1) Position statement of the presented paper, (2) issues/questions to be discussed in each activity (see below), and (3) a short participant profile. These documents will be available before/during/after the workshop for all participants to review, and set the ground for a collective discussion during the event.

3.1 The workshop day

In this one-day, 3-hour workshop (9 AM to 12 PM EDT), researchers will engage in interactive activities that will be future-focused (Table 1). After the two keynote speeches by AI4SG and HCI4D. Shortly we will commence with our first round of presentations from participants where we play the pre-recorded videos with the presenters available to answer questions. We then move to Q&A where the participants will discuss with the presenters and the organizers to characterize barriers, facilitators, and research infrastructures needed within their work plans.

After a short break, followed by the second round of presentations, we will have our second Q&A where the participants will discuss with the presenters and the organizers to characterize barriers, facilitators, and research infrastructures needed within their work plans. Shortly we will identify the next steps for how we can collectively put work plans into action and define the scope of a special issue proposal to be submitted to a renowned AI venue aimed at encapsulating the discussions held throughout the workshop, more specifically current progress within the field and research towards the formulation and actioning of Big Data, AI and HCI4D futures.

3.2 Plans for Publicity

We will reach out to a broad range of audiences who might be interested in participating in this workshop, from junior to established scholars and practitioners, inside and outside the AI and HCI4D domains. Therefore, we will publicize the workshop and distribute the call for participation (CFP, please find it in the appendix) via relevant professional mailing lists, appropriate social media outlets, as well as personal connections with various research communities (e.g. HCI4D, AI4SG, Big Data and Society, etc.). We will also use relevant hashtags (e.g. #AI4SG_FAcT) on social media. Participants will be asked to submit position papers relevant to the workshop themes. The organizing team will review all submissions in relation to their fit with the workshop goals and contribution to thematic discussions. Accepted position papers will be posted on the workshop website as open access before the workshop date. Our website is under-construction at this moment. We will update the website with the call for participation, information about

attendance, and the workshop agenda on or before December 16, 2021. The link to our website is: [http://www\[dot\]bigdataai-globalsouth\[dot\]com](http://www[dot]bigdataai-globalsouth[dot]com).

4 DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING PLANS

We will video-record the Zoom call of the workshop. The recorded audio will be transcribed later for further thematic analysis. In this process, we will label the participants remarks and organize and categorize them accordingly. Then we will summarize them in a short essay where we will explain our expected goals of the workshop and describe how much of them were met through the session. We will also share this essay to FAccT organizers and upload it on our website for future enthusiasts. Please note that we will inform and seek consent from the participants regarding the Zoom call record process and all the prospective remarks presented in the essay would be carefully anonymized.

The discussions and outputs of the workshop will be communicated to the broader AI and HCI community via an ACM Interactions article and an HCI full-length publication. In the Interactions piece, the organizers will provide an outline that entails a roadmap for the co-created future HCI agenda of research and design in the field of Big Data, AI and HCI4D which was informed by discussions centered around the workshop's themes. Additionally, organizers plan to hold a call in a special issue of ToCHI journal and coordination of participation and collaboration for the submission will be arranged accordingly. After the workshop, a recap of the activities and artifacts will be posted on the website to inform interested participants along with the accepted participant submissions. Organizers will keep the website open and updated to act as a repository of resources and links for further research and practice in the community. We also plan to incorporate our experiences and critical thoughts on existing and future AI and Big Data research in developing countries in a full-length paper in a renowned venue of AI and HCI.

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5 APPENDIX

5.1 Call for Participation(CFP)

We invite researchers to submit papers that (a) identify unique challenges of AI and Big Data in the Global South, (b) discuss designs, policies, and strategies to decolonize AI, and/or (c) connect with existing scholarship in HCI4D and AI4SG. In this interactive virtual workshop, the participants will work in thematic clusters to create a collective vision for future Big Data, AI and HCI4D research, identify how to overcome research challenges, and establish the infrastructures for further progress. We call for position papers under the following or closely related themes:

Missing history: Discuss the problems of the missing histories of many communities in the Global South and develop strategies to support them against AI biases.

Whose ethics: Identify the limitations of western metaphysical ethics in AI, and develop strategies to integrate local ethics in it.

Infrastructural Politics, Big Data and AI: Identify infrastructural challenges and politics in implementing big data services in the Global South.

Submission Guideline:

Submission Deadline: February 24, 2022.

Page limit: 2 (+ reference).

Template/Format: ACM Master Article Templates, Single-column.

Submission: Email to bigdataai.globalsouth@gmail.com; *Subject Line:* “CHI2022 workshop submission”.

Selection Criteria: Contribution to workshop’s themes, quality of presentation, potential to stimulate discussions.

Notification of Acceptance: March 10, 2022.

NB: Upon acceptance, at least one author must attend the workshop, prepare a three-minute long video presentation, and register for the workshop and at least one day of the conference.

Accepted papers will be archived on the workshop’s website.

Accepted papers will be archived on the workshop’s website: [http://www\[dot\]bigdataai-globalsouth\[dot\]com](http://www[dot]bigdataai-globalsouth[dot]com).

5.2 Coordinators' Bios

The organizers in this proposal have been working in of HCI4D, Big Data, AI and other close related domains with practitioners and many marginalized communities across the world for year using diverse methods. We have collective experiences of organizing CHI workshops, too.

Sharifa Sultana is a PhD Candidate at Cornell University, USA and Facebook Fellow. She conducts research in the intersection of HCI, ICTD, wellbeing, and feminist-HCI. She aims to design computational tools and systems to address the challenges for the rural low-education population while accessing information. She is actively engaged with local NGOs and traditional healthcare support providers in rural Bangladesh.

Mohammad Rashidujjaman Rifat is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Toronto. His research is at the intersection of HCI, ICTD, and faith. Rifat conducts qualitative studies and computational analysis to explore faith-based values, rationality, and politics; and designs technologies to mitigate faith-based intolerance and make technologies more faith inclusive.

Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at University of Toronto. He conducts research in the intersection between Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Information and Communication Technology and Development (ICTD). He received his PhD in Information Science from Cornell University in 2017. He established the first HCI research lab in Bangladesh in 2009, and still maintains it. His research work is built around the concept of 'voice' that connects various branches of political philosophy to technology intervention. His current research focuses on the politics of faith and justification in computing.

5.3 Presenters' Bios

Ranjit Singh is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the AI on the Ground Initiative of Data & Society Research Institute and has a doctorate in Science and Technology Studies from Cornell University. He is currently leading a research project on and collaborating on building a research community around mapping the concepts, keywords, and everyday stories centered on data-driven interventions and AI in/from the Global South.

Julian Posada is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information and a Fellow of Massey College and the Schwartz Reisman Institute. His research, supported by the International Development Research Centre, investigates the experiences of workers in Latin America who annotate data for artificial intelligence through digital labour platforms and questions the current sustainability of AI systems.

Azra Ismail is a PhD Candidate in Human-Centered Computing at Georgia Tech, USA, and is a recipient of the Work in the Age of Intelligent Machines (WAIM) Doctoral Fellowship. Her research examines the role of automated and data-driven systems in frontline health, particularly for women health workers in low-level and precarious roles in India.

Yousif Hassan is a Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School program on Science, Technology, and Society and PhD (ABD) with the Science and Technology Studies (STS) program at York University. His areas of interest are human-computer interactions, critical algorithm studies, the political economy of technoscience, critical innovation studies, communication studies, and intersectional and decolonial STS. His current research focuses on the social, economic, and political implications of digital technologies such as AI, blockchain, and the digital platform economy examining the relationship between race, digital technology, and technoscientific capitalism.

Seyram Avle is Assistant Professor of Global Digital Media in the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her research focuses on digital technology cultures and innovation across parts of Africa, China,

and the United States. This work primarily takes a critical approach towards understanding how digital technologies are made and used, as well as their implications for issues of labor, identity, and futures.

Nithya Sambasivan is a Staff Research Scientist at PAIR, Google Research and leads the human-computer interaction (HCI) group at the India lab. Her current research focuses on designing responsible AI systems by focusing on the humans of the AI/ML pipeline, specifically in the non-West. Her research is a core contributor to Google's products and strategy for the Global South, and has won numerous best paper awards and nominations at top-tier computing conferences. Nithya has a PhD. in Information and Computer Sciences from UC Irvine.

Rajesh Veeraraghavan is an Assistant Professor of Science Technology and International Affairs (STIA) Program at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. His work focuses on the intersection of data, technology and governance. He is interested in the politics of data and technology, inequality and the role of data and technology to improve lives of the marginalized. He has a Ph.D from University of California, Berkeley from the School of Information.

Priyank Chandra is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. His research studies the sociotechnical practices of communities living at the margins of society. Specifically, he focuses on how informality shapes technology use, sustains collaboration, and creates resilient practices. He received his PhD in Information from University of Michigan.

Rafael Grohmann is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the Unisinos University, Brazil. Coordinator of DigiLabour Research Lab. Principal Investigator for the Fairwork project in Brazil. Member of Scholars Council, Center for Critical Internet Inquiry (C2i2), UCLA. Founding Board Member of Labor Tech Research Network. Coordinator of Platform Cooperativism Observatory in Brazil. Editor of the book *Os Laboratórios do Trabalho Digital* (Laboratories of Digital Labor). His research interests include platform cooperativism and worker-owned platforms, work & AI, datafication, workers' organization, platform labor, communication and work