

A conversation starter for the humanitarian & development sector

7

Questions
Your Organisation
Should Be Asking
About Its AI Use.

Whether you're in Port Sudan or Geneva, the questions are the same.

The answers shouldn't be.

01

Who in your organisation is using AI — and does leadership know?

Most AI adoption isn't a strategic decision. It's staff quietly using ChatGPT, translation tools, and AI-assisted writing to cope with impossible workloads. This isn't a problem to punish — it's a reality to govern. If leadership doesn't know what tools are in use, they can't manage the risks those tools create.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Do we have visibility over how AI is actually being used across our teams — not just the tools we've officially adopted?

02

What decisions does AI influence — and who is affected by them?

AI doesn't just process data. It shapes who gets prioritised, how needs are assessed, how communications are framed, and how resources are allocated. The question isn't whether your organisation uses AI. It's whether the people affected by AI-influenced decisions have any visibility into that.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Can we trace which decisions in our programmes are shaped by AI — and do the people affected know?

03

Could this tool work differently for different communities?

AI tools are built on data and assumptions that reflect certain contexts — often Global North, English-language, well-resourced settings. A translation tool that works well for French may fail for Tigrinya. A categorisation model trained on European case data may misclassify needs in a different context entirely.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Have we tested whether this tool performs equitably across the communities and contexts we serve?

04

What happens when it gets it wrong?

Every AI system produces errors. The question is what those errors cost — and who bears that cost. In humanitarian work, it could mean someone is excluded from assistance, misidentified, or exposed. If your organisation doesn't have a plan for when AI fails, the people you serve will absorb that failure.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Do we have a process for catching, reporting, and correcting AI errors before they cause harm?

05

Who is accountable?

When an AI tool contributes to a harmful outcome — a flawed assessment, a biased ranking, a data breach — who is responsible? If the answer is unclear, accountability doesn't exist. AI doesn't remove the need for human judgment; it makes it more important, because the speed and scale of automated decisions can amplify harm faster than any manual process.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Do we have clear accountability mechanisms for AI-assisted decisions — and do the people involved know they're responsible?

06

Do the communities you serve have a say in this?

Consent isn't enough. The people affected by AI-driven decisions should have genuine input into whether and how these tools are used — not be informed after the fact. If your organisation can't point to where that happens, it's a governance gap.



THE QUESTION TO ASK

Can we point to where the people affected by our AI use actually have input into whether and how it happens?

07

Is your organisation ready to answer these questions at scale?

One team using one tool is manageable. But AI adoption scales fast — and once it's embedded in workflows, it's hard to reverse. The time to build governance, oversight, and clear policies is now, before AI use becomes too widespread to manage. Waiting until something goes wrong is not a strategy.

THE QUESTION TO ASK



Do we have the structures, policies, and capacity to govern AI use as it grows — or are we hoping for the best?

What comes next

If your organisation could answer all seven questions confidently — *you're ahead of most.*

If not, you're in good company. The majority of organisations in this sector are in the same position.

These questions are designed to open a conversation, not close one.

The answers will look different for an INGO in Geneva, a local organisation in Dhaka, and a UN agency in Nairobi. That's the point. There is no shortcut to understanding what AI means in your specific context — but asking the right questions is where it starts.

Let's talk

Working through these questions for your organisation? *Get in touch.*

I offer a free introductory conversation to help you figure out where to start. No pitch, no commitment — just an honest look at where the gaps might be.



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