

AI FOR IMPACT



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ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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INTRODUCTION

On 27 November, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired its 42nd episode of the virtual fireside chat series 'Voices of Sustainability.' This episode spotlighted three organisations utilising AI in unique and exciting

ways: D-Olivette Enterprises, Distant Imagery and Hyera. The panel discussed how their organisations are leveraging AI to tackle global challenges, analyse large-scale data and generate impactful solutions.



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SUMMARY

The 42nd episode of Voices of Sustainability, titled 'AI for Impact', brought together three leading experts to discuss how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries and driving sustainable change. The episode, moderated by journalist Charlotte Kan, aimed to explore practical examples of AI integration for impactful and sustainable solutions across different fields.

Charlotte Kan opened the conversation by welcoming the panellists and highlighting the critical role AI plays in addressing global challenges. She then invited Asif Ansari, President and CTO of Hyera, to share his insights on how his company uses AI to create sustainable solutions. Asif began by discussing Hyera's work in converting agricultural waste into valuable products, such as activated carbon, hydrogen and biofuels.

He emphasised that using AI allows the company to adapt its thermochemical processes in real time, ensuring consistent output regardless of varying types of agricultural feedstock. This approach not only improves production efficiency but also sequesters up to 90% of carbon that would otherwise contribute to atmospheric pollution. Asif noted that this AI-driven adaptability has been crucial for expanding Hyera's operations and creating a significant environmental impact.

Next, Charlotte turned to Jane Glavan, Co-founder of Distant Imagery, to explain how her company leverages AI for ecological restoration. Jane, proud of Distant Imagery's UAE roots, detailed how her organisation uses drones, kites and balloons equipped with AI-powered tools for monitoring and planting. She highlighted their achievement of planting 5.5 million mangroves in the UAE and how these projects have been scaled to developing communities in the Global South.

According to Jane, AI enables her team to plan precise planting patterns and monitor seedlings on a massive scale, significantly reducing labour and costs. However, she acknowledged the challenges posed by



Using AI, we found that there's a wide variety of agricultural waste that is produced and different types of feedstocks. To produce a consistent and reliable product that can be monetised, for instance activated carbon, biofuels, hydrogen and power, you need to be able to adapt your process in real time.

Asif Ansari
President & CTO
Hyera



understanding the micro-nuances of ecosystems and expressed optimism about the potential of AI to help address these complexities over time.

Charlotte then invited Tunde Adeyemi, CEO and Co-founder of D-Olivette Enterprise, to share his perspective on integrating AI into energy solutions for underserved communities. Tunde explained that D-Olivette was founded to bring sustainable energy solutions to rural and refugee communities where energy access is limited. He recounted how his organisation designed a product called the "kitchen box," which converts organic waste into clean cooking gas, helping thousands of women in rural Africa.

Tunde highlighted the importance of making AI accessible, noting that his team developed chatbots that can operate offline and communicate in local African languages. This inclusivity empowers farmers and women to use AI tools comfortably, helping them produce clean energy and optimise agricultural practices. For Tunde, AI is not about luxury but about creating user-friendly solutions that enhance community resilience.

Charlotte then steered the conversation to discuss the broader role of AI in sustainability. Asif pointed out that while data is abundant, it is often siloed and fragmented, making it difficult to extract meaningful insights. He stressed the importance of harmonising data across industries and geographical regions to develop integrated solutions that improve resource use and sustainability. Jane agreed, adding that the ability for different AI systems to communicate and share data will be essential for future advancements. She noted that while current AI platforms are powerful, they can be expensive and difficult to create. Making these technologies more affordable and accessible will be vital for global progress.

Tunde echoed these sentiments and highlighted that AI should not only be about advanced applications but also about solving basic, real-world problems. He shared how



AI helps us build platforms that evaluate ecological changes from drone data, enabling us to monitor millions of seedlings and understand the micro-nuances of what makes restoration sites thrive.

Jane Glavan
Co-founder
Distant Imagery



We believe AI should be inclusive. We've simplified it so that anybody, even in rural areas, can use it to optimise the production of clean cooking gas and agricultural solutions.

Tunde Adeyemi
CEO & Co-founder
D-Olivette Enterprise



D-Olivette's simplified AI tools help communities without access to sophisticated technology or stable internet. This approach makes sustainable energy solutions attainable even in the most remote areas, demonstrating AI's potential to democratise access to technology.

Charlotte concluded the episode by asking the panellists about their visions for the future of AI in sustainability. Asif emphasised that integrating different data sources and opening up access to these insights will be crucial for accelerating impactful solutions. Jane expressed hope for more cost-effective and mobile AI tools that can process data in real time. Tunde expressed his optimism for AI as a beacon of hope that could solve pressing global issues, from energy poverty to environmental degradation, by empowering communities at the grassroots level.

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BIOGRAPHIES



Tunde Adeyemi

CEO & Co-founder
D-Olivette Enterprise

With a master's degree and a deep commitment to change, Tunde Adeyemi tackles energy poverty in underserved communities. Through AI-enabled biodigesters that transform waste into clean cooking gas, electricity and agricultural inputs, D-Olivette has reached over 500 off-grid communities, cutting emissions and fostering sustainable livelihoods. Tunde's mission is to empower 1 million women and farmers to create self-sustaining, closed-loop systems for clean energy and sustainable agriculture by 2030.



Jane Glavan

Co-founder
Distant Imagery

Jane Glavan, Co-founder of Distant Imagery Solutions, is a pioneer in climate tech and community empowerment. With deep experience in large-scale environmental projects, she leads Distant Imagery Solutions in creating affordable, self-engineered restoration tools. Under her leadership, Distant Imagery Solutions has planted over 5.5 million mangroves and is now looking towards empowering Global South communities to drive sustainable impact.



Asif Ansari

President & CTO
Hyera

Asif Ansari, an entrepreneur and technology pioneer, has successfully commercialised over a dozen disruptive technologies in clean technology and aerospace. His first start-up, Omni Systems, designed the Lunar Prospector Spacecraft for NASA's lunar resource mapping mission. His numerous notable ventures in clean technology, including eSolar, Hyera, and Sundam Energy, were all driven by his passion for developing innovative, viable, and sustainable solutions that address climate change.



Charlotte Kan

Journalist

The conversation was moderated by:

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OUTCOMES



Unified data use is crucial for maximising the sustainability impact of AI-driven solutions through cross-sector harmonisation



Inclusive AI solutions can adapt technology for remote communities, empowering them locally and enhancing access



Efficient ecological monitoring benefits from AI by reducing labour and improving precision in large-scale environmental projects



Waste-to-value innovations using AI can convert agricultural waste into renewable energy, facilitating significant carbon capture



Future AI development should focus on accessible, user-friendly tools to ensure widespread adoption and impactful results

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