



Écosystèmes et développement
Pour un développement éco

Indigenous Peoples and Artificial Intelligence: What can the Bedzang learn from the 2025 theme? .

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Introduction

Every year, on August 9, the world celebrates *the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. In 2025, the United Nations has chosen the theme:

"Indigenous Peoples and Artificial Intelligence: Defending Rights, Shaping Futures."

This theme reflects a global ambition that invites Indigenous Communities to take part in shaping the digital future. But what does such a vision mean for the Bedzang, an Indigenous Community in Cameroon that still lacks access to basic rights and services?

This article explores how the Bedzang can engage with the theme, step by step, starting from their current situation and looking toward their future.



I: What will it take for the Bedzang to engage with the AI tools?

The global theme for 2025 calls Indigenous Peoples to participate in shaping the future with Artificial Intelligence. This opens an important reflection: what would the Bedzang need in order to take part meaningfully in AI tools?

1.1 Understanding the language and concepts

AI comes with a new vocabulary like algorithms, data, digital systems, etc. These are not part of everyday life in Bedzang communities. But if AI will be part of tomorrow's world, shouldn't the Bedzang begin, little by little, to learn how it works? This requires time, trust, and culturally adapted methods of learning and not imposition.

1.2 Building the conditions for digital participation

Before engaging with AI, certain basics are needed. In Bedzang hamlets, many things are still missing:

- *Electricity and internet,*
- *Schools with digital tools,*
- *Teachers trained in technology,*
- *Content in local languages.*

These are not optional. They are the foundation for participation in any digital future. Without them, the gap will only grow.

II: Can Artificial Intelligence be meaningful for the Bedzang?

Once the basics are in place, what role could AI play for a community like the Bedzang?

2.1 AI as a tool to strengthen identity and rights

With the right support, AI might someday help the Bedzang in:

- *Map their lands and protect their territories*
- *Preserve their language and oral traditions*
- *Improve access to education and health through mobile platforms*
- *Detect and report illegal land use or deforestation, analyze satellite images,*
- *Document and share useful information with the community and 3rd parties,* such as complaint mechanisms, health alerts, or civil registration campaigns,

using mobile apps or automated messaging systems.

These are possibilities, not promises. But they show that AI is not just for rich countries. It can serve the needs of communities like the Bedzang too, if introduced respectfully.

2.2 From beneficiaries to actors

The goal is not simply to give the Bedzang access to technology, but to ensure they become actors of their own digital future. That means:

- *Participating in project design,*
- *Choosing what they want to use AI for,*
- *Benefiting from AI in ways that match their priorities.*

The real challenge is: how do we make sure the Bedzang are not just passive users, but full participants in the world AI is helping to shape?

Recommendations

To support the Bedzang in connecting with the global theme, four actions can guide the way:

1. Create learning opportunities use local tools and methods (storytelling, visuals, discussion groups) to explain what AI is and how it might help.
2. Help build basic infrastructure, for without electricity, connectivity, or access to digital tools, inclusion in AI conversations is impossible.
3. Reorient the priorities around the actual needs expressed by Indigenous communities themselves.
4. Recognize and elevate traditional knowledge systems, which are often sidelined in innovation and development narratives.





Conclusion

The theme “Indigenous Peoples and Artificial Intelligence” is not a verdict on where communities are, it is an invitation to imagine where they could go. For the Bedzang, it is a call to prepare, learn, and engage. It is also a call to partners and institutions to support this journey.

Artificial Intelligence can be part of their future, but only if we begin building the path today.

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