CASE 2: Summary

The WaLLM chatbot was developed to address the pressing issue of limited access to reliable, high-quality information in developing regions, where users often face infrastructural, financial, and digital literacy barriers. Aimed at adult users in Pakistan, Sudan, and diaspora communities in the U.S., WaLLM operates entirely through WhatsApp—a platform already embedded in local communication habits. This learning context leverages users' familiarity with WhatsApp to minimize the learning curve, making the chatbot an accessible entry point to generative AI. Powered by multiple large language models (LLMs), WaLLM provides factual answers to user-submitted queries, particularly around health, education, and personal development, and augments this with interactive features such as daily "Top Questions," AI-suggested follow-ups, and a gamified leaderboard. These features not only enhance engagement but also support sustained learning over time.

WaLLM directly supports distance education by providing asynchronous, text-based access to expert-like guidance without requiring advanced hardware or internet infrastructure. It performs several practical functions: answering factual questions, drafting text, translating language, generating follow-ups, and offering curated content drawn from prior queries. By reducing the cognitive and technical load typically required to engage with AI systems, it empowers users to articulate needs, reflect on responses, and iterate learning. The collaborative dynamic between user and AI—especially through personalized interaction histories and follow-up suggestions—enables a level of co-construction that would be difficult to achieve independently. In educational contexts like low-resource distance programs, this tool could be adapted to enhance learner agency and support curriculum-aligned exploration.

To implement WaLLM locally, support would be needed in the form of WhatsApp Business API integration, culturally relevant content tuning, and trust calibration mechanisms to mitigate risks of misinformation. Its broader value lies in democratizing AI access while revealing potential exclusions due to English-only interfaces or subscription-free limitations in more advanced models