

EvalFest2026:

Evaluations in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation, and Impact.

Summary Report



Organisers:



Donors:



Contributors:



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About EvalFest

EvalFest is the biennial flagship convening of the Evaluation Community of India (ECOI), designed to strengthen evaluation culture, capacity, and practice in India. It brings together evaluators, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, academics, civil society organisations, funders, and young and emerging evaluators, youth to reflect on how evidence can better inform policies, programmes, and social change.

Over successive editions, EvalFest has evolved alongside the development ecosystem, responding to emerging challenges and shifts in evaluation practice. Past themes – Visibility, Voice, and Value (2018), Digital Development and Inclusion (2020), Creativity, Collaboration, and Convergence (2022), and Responsive, Adaptive, and Future-proof Approaches (2024) – have expanded conversations on inclusion, ethics, innovation, and learning. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge-sharing, EvalFest has become a key platform for advancing evaluation thinking and practice in India.

EvalFest 2026

EvalFest 2026 was built on the legacy of previous editions while responding to the growing complexity shaping evaluation practices today. The 2026 edition foregrounded the need to harmonise youth perspectives, innovative methods and technologies, and a strong focus on impact and learning. It sought to reposition evaluation as a practice that not only measures outcomes, but also informs adaptation, decision-making, and transformative change.

Centred on the theme *“Evaluations in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation, and Impact,”* the conference recognised the need to move beyond compliance and measurement towards approaches that are inclusive, ethical, and transformative.

Discussions across the festival were guided by four interlinked sub-themes:



1. Inclusive and Participatory Evaluation: Youth, Gender, and Communities

Centring excluded voices, particularly youth and marginalised groups, through knowledge co-creation, intergenerational learning, and the integration of lived experiences into evaluation processes.



2. Innovations for Impact and Learning Loops

Exploring technological and methodological innovations to deepen impact assessment, embed evaluation insights into decision-making, and strengthen real-time feedback and continuous learning systems.





3. Next Generation M&E: Technology, AI, and Ethical Futures

Examining the opportunities and risks of digital technologies, AI, and big data, while addressing concerns of digital inequality and upholding ethical principles in evaluation practice.



4. Narratives and Storytelling for Change

Using participatory and qualitative approaches, including storytelling and lived experience, to strengthen evidence-based advocacy and connect evaluation findings with real-world policy and practice.

Held from **10th to 13th February 2026**, EvalFest brought together pre-conference workshops, plenaries, sponsored panels, round table discussions, paper and poster presentations, and an innovation bazaar. The festival opened with workshops on 10th February at the Department of Development Communication and Extension, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. The second day, hosted at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, featured the inaugural session and plenaries. Technical sessions aligned with the conference themes were held on the third day, followed by a highly participatory final day with poster presentations and the Innovation Bazaar engaging young and emerging evaluation professionals.

Across these engagements, the conference explored how evaluation can remain relevant in a changing world, integrate youth, gender, and inclusion meaningfully, and leverage technology and AI responsibly—ensuring that evaluation drives learning, informs decision-making, and contributes to real impact.

The scale and diversity of participation at EvalFest 2026 further reflected this commitment to inclusive and multi-stakeholder engagement.



Participation Snapshot



300 participants engaged

across four days, reflecting the scale and diversity of EvalFest 2026.



Working Professionals



Speakers & Chairs



Students



Government representatives



International Delegates

(A strong practitioner-led participation complemented by academia, policy actors, and global voices.)

Participant Engagement



Over 150 participants engaged beyond a single day, indicating sustained interest and participation.

Plenary sessions on Day 2 saw the highest participation, while attendance gradually tapered across subsequent days, reflecting a shift towards more focused and engaged participation.

Professional Spread

Participants represented a diverse mix of practitioners, academia, government, and international organisations, underscoring EvalFest's role as a multi-stakeholder platform bridging research, policy, and practice.



Geographical Spread



- **32 international participants** attended EvalFest 2026
- Participants came from **diverse global contexts across academia and practice**
- The presence of international delegates contributed to **cross-country learning and exchange of evaluation perspectives**

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

10 February 2026 | Pre-Conference Workshops

9:30 am -5:00 pm	Full Day Workshop Exploring the how, the why and the what of human rights- and gender-based evaluation
9:30 am – 1:00 pm	Half Day Workshops • Bricolage in Practice: Designing Adaptive, Equity-Centered Evaluations • Leveraging No-Code AI for Multilingual & Regionalised M&E • From Field to Cloud: Using ICT Tools for Data Collection, Analysis, and Dashboard
2:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Half Day Workshops • AI-Enabled Health Systems: Half-Day Introductory Session • Learn AI Tools and Workflows with 90%+ Accuracy Validated in UN Evaluations • Youth-Centered Evaluation: Participatory and Transformative Approaches for Learning and Impact

11 February 2026 | Inaugural and Plenaries

9:00 am -11:00 am	Inaugural Session: Evaluations in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation and Impact
11:30 am – 1:00 pm	Plenary 1: Evaluation in Complex New World Order
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Plenary 2: Advancing Context-Led Evaluation and Collaborative Learning for Impact: Insights from the NDB Independent Evaluation Office and Peers
3:45 pm – 5:00 pm	Plenary 3: Inclusion of Youth and Gender in Evaluation

12 February 2026 | Technical Sessions

9:30 am -11:00 am	• Learning Circle: Re-centering Citizens/Communities in Development & Evaluation • Measuring What Matters: Evaluating Healthcare Programs for Better Health Systems • AI in Food and Agriculture Systems: Evidence and Implications from LMICs • Strengthening the Evidence Ecosystem & its Role in Enhancing State Capacity in India
11:30 am -1:00 pm	• World YWCA's Feminist Consultation Methodology – Community-led Accountability in Practice • Innovations for Impact and Learning Loops: Selected Papers • Aligning & Advancing Global Evaluation Agenda (GEA) 2.0: Enabling Environment, Organisational Capacities, and Synergies • Decentralised Institutionalisation of Evaluation at State Level
2:00 am -3:30 pm	• Inclusive and Participatory Evaluation: Youth, Gender, and Communities: Selected Papers • Social Norms and Behaviour Change Evaluations • Monitoring and Evaluation in Emergencies: Lessons from Sri Lanka on Youth Engagement, Technology, and Adaptive Impact
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	• Navigating the Knot: Real Stories of Integrating Gender and Systems Thinking in Evaluation • Building Capacities and Preparing for the Job Market in the Evaluation Sector • Next Generation M&E: Technology, AI, and Ethical Futures: Multiple Perspectives

13 February 2026 | Innovation Bazaar and Closing

10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Innovation Bazaar & Poster Presentations
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Valedictory & Closing Ceremony

SATELLITE WORKSHOPS

📍 LADY IRWIN COLLEGE, NEW DELHI

Exploring the How, the Why and the What of Human Rights- and Gender-Based Evaluation

Organised by: DEval

Facilitator: Lena Taube, Martin Bruder

Session Snapshot: The session examined how human rights and gender equality perspectives can be integrated into evaluation processes through a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). The discussion explored how evaluators can move beyond measuring programme outputs to examining whether development interventions uphold principles of equality, participation, and accountability. The speakers highlighted the importance of understanding structural inequalities and ensuring the visibility and participation of marginalised groups, particularly women and youth, throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. The session reinforced the importance of embedding equality, non-discrimination, accountability, and participation into evaluation frameworks.

Key Frameworks Discussed

- Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 16)
- Dimensions of Human Rights and Gender-Based Evaluation

Bricolage in Practice: Designing Adaptive, Equity-Centred Evaluations

Organised by: GENSA and ISST

Facilitator(s): Sonal Zaveri

Session Snapshot: The session explored the concept of bricolage as an adaptive evaluation approach that enables practitioners to creatively combine and adapt methodological tools in response to complex development contexts. The discussion highlighted how bricolage supports flexible and equity-centred evaluation design, particularly in situations characterised by uncertainty, diverse stakeholder perspectives, and limited resources. Through theoretical frameworks and participant reflections, the session examined how evaluators can rethink methodological rigour and adopt more responsive approaches that prioritise context, participation, and learning.

Key Frameworks Discussed

- Alkin's Evaluation Tree
- Lemire's Evaluation Train Map
- Inclusive Rigour Framework
- Utilisation-Focused Developmental Evaluation (UFDE)
- Outcome Mapping



Leveraging No-Code AI for Multilingual and Regionalised Monitoring and Evaluation

Organised by: EvalYouth India

Facilitator(s): Arshee Rizvi, Partik Jawale and Mayur Narute

Session Snapshot: The session explored how no-code artificial intelligence tools can support multilingual and regionally responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. The speakers demonstrated how emerging digital tools allow practitioners to build dashboards, conduct data analysis, and translate information without requiring advanced programming skills. The discussion highlighted the potential of no-code platforms to make evaluation more accessible, particularly in contexts where language diversity and limited technical capacity pose challenges to data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Key Frameworks Discussed

- Hybrid Intelligence Approach
- Theory of Change
- Logical Frameworks
- SMART indicators

From Field to Cloud: Using ICT Tools for Data Collection, Analysis, and Dashboard

Organised by: Trestle

Facilitator: Maulik Chauhan

Session Snapshot: The session examined the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools to strengthen data collection processes in monitoring and evaluation. The discussion highlighted how digital platforms can improve the accuracy, efficiency, and reliability of field data collection while reducing manual errors associated with paper-based systems. Through practical examples, the speakers demonstrated how ICT-based tools enable organisations to streamline data gathering, manage datasets more effectively, and access information in real time. The session also aimed to familiarise participants with commonly used digital platforms and explore how such tools can support more responsive monitoring systems and evidence-based decision-making in programme implementation.

AI-Enabled Health Systems: Half-Day Introductory Session

Organised by: Sambodhi

Facilitators: Anuradha and Shikha

Session Snapshot: The half-day introductory session explored the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in strengthening health systems and supporting evaluation processes, focusing on how routine health data can be transformed into actionable insights for planning, monitoring, and decision-making. Using the six building blocks of health systems as a framework, the discussion highlighted the potential of AI to improve efficiency, equity, and responsiveness. It also examined challenges within the Indian health system, including weak referral systems, workforce shortages, and data gaps, with particular attention to the role of frontline workers such as ASHA workers. National initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission were discussed as enabling integrated health information systems. Participants engaged with AI tools through hands-on exercises to explore their application in evaluation and analysis.

Learn AI Tools and Workflows with 90%+ Accuracy Validated in UN Evaluations

Organised by: AILYZE

Facilitator: James Goh

Session Snapshot: The workshop examined the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) in evaluation processes, drawing on real-world applications from international development contexts. Using case studies such as UNESCO's country and liaison strategy review, it demonstrated how AI can enhance scale, consistency, and analytical insight while retaining human oversight. The session highlighted the use of AI in surveys, semi-structured interviews, qualitative analysis, and report drafting, and introduced emerging approaches such as avatar interviewers and advanced analytics systems for managing large and complex datasets. Throughout, the emphasis remained on transparency, ethical safeguards, and the central role of human judgment in ensuring the responsible use of AI in evaluation practice.

Youth-Centred Evaluation – Participatory and Transformative Approaches for Learning

Organised by: Rai Sen Gupta, Evaluation Consultant, UNICEF

Session Snapshot: The session focused on advancing evaluation practice by centering youth voices and leadership in complex environments. It introduced Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) and Youth Transformative Participatory (YTP) approaches to address power asymmetries and move beyond token participation. Through interactive methods, including a World Café format, the session explored how youth can be meaningfully engaged across all stages of the evaluation cycle—from design to dissemination—while positioning them as co-creators and knowledge producers. By combining conceptual frameworks with interactive discussions, the session emphasised the need to move beyond symbolic participation toward structured, equitable, and impactful youth engagement.

Key Frameworks Discussed

- Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE)
- Youth Transformative Participatory (YTP) approach



INAUGURAL AND PLENARIES

📍 INDIA HABITAT CENTRE, NEW DELHI

Inaugural: Evaluation in Complex and Evolving Contexts: Harmonising Youth, Innovation and Impact

Panelists: *Rajib Nandi*, Founder Member, ECOI (Chair); *Ashwani Muthoo*, Director General of the Independent Evaluation Office, New Development Bank; *Andrea Wojnar*, Resident Representative, India and Bhutan Country Director, UNFPA; *Suchi Gaur*, Senior Director of Strategy and Operations, World-YWCA, *Elizabeth Faure*, Representative and Country Director (India), World Food Programme; *Heera*, Programme Director, Empower, India

Moderator: *Archna Kumar*, Lady Irwin College

Session Snapshot: The inaugural session set a reflective and forward-looking tone by situating evaluation within a rapidly changing global landscape marked by climate uncertainty, inequality, and fragile development systems. Chaired by Rajib Nandi, the session emphasised moving beyond compliance-driven evaluation towards a more adaptive, participatory, and learning-oriented systems. Ashwani Muthoo highlighted evaluation as an agent of change for achieving sustainable development goals, while Andrea Wojnar underscored its role in guiding judgement and adaptation rather than producing certainty. Suchi Gaur called for shifting from youth participation to youth authority and rethinking innovation as a tool for redistributing power. Elizabeth Faure stressed aligning evaluation with policy and budgeting cycles, and Heera reinforced the value of participatory, real-time evaluation approaches rooted in lived experiences. Moderated by Archna Kumar, the session concluded that evaluation must act as a compass for decision-making, integrating youth voices, innovation, and collaboration to strengthen impact and bridge the gap between evidence and policy in complex systems.

Plenary 1: Evaluation in a New World Order

Panelists: *Rajesh Tandon*, Founder Director, PRIA (Chair); *Paramjyoti Chattopadhyay*, Head RAM & Evaluation, World Food Program; *Scott Chaplowe*, Evaluation, Strategy & Capacity Development Specialist, IEA; *Sanjay Kumar*, Population Dynamics Specialist, UNFPA; *Aparna Dua*, Partner, Blended Finance Company; *Phuntsho Choden*, President, Evaluation Association Bhutan.

Moderator: *Rashmi Agrawal*

Session Snapshot: The plenary session examined the shifting role of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) in a context shaped by global complexity, funding constraints, and technological transformation, calling for a decisive move away from linear, compliance-driven approaches towards adaptive, participatory, and systems-based frameworks. Chaired by Rajesh Tandon and moderated by Rashmi Agrawal, the session brought together diverse perspectives across development, public health, finance, and cultural evaluation systems. Paramjyoti Chattopadhyay highlighted the need for complexity-aware, real-time evaluation integrating AI and interdisciplinary approaches, while Scott Chaplowe cautioned against over-reliance on metrics, advocating for systems thinking and valuing qualitative insights. Sanjay Kumar demonstrated how rigorous evaluation and digital engagement can drive measurable outcomes in programmes like *My Rights, My Choice*. Aparna Dua emphasised innovative financing models such as blended and outcome-based financing to address SDG gaps, while Phuntsho Choden introduced Bhutan's Wholesome Evaluation rooted in Gross National Happiness, foregrounding wellbeing and cultural context. Concluding reflections underscored that evaluation must be ethical, inclusive, and action-oriented—bridging evidence with decision-making, embracing innovation thoughtfully, and centring equity and participation to respond effectively to an evolving global order.



Plenary 2: Advancing Context-Led Evaluation and Collaborative Learning for Impact

Panelists: *Fariha Ahmed*, Partnerships Specialist, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), New Development Bank (NDB) (**Chair**); *Nidhi Chhibber*, Director General, Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog, Government of India; *Binitesh Kumar*, Principal Professional, Indian Regional Office (IRO), New Development Bank (NDB); *David Cuming*, Senior Quality Assurance Specialist, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome; *Nidhi Chaudhary*, Evaluation Specialist, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), New Development Bank (NDB).

Moderator: *Aniruddha Brahmachari*

Session Snapshot: The session focused on strengthening context-led evaluation and fostering collaborative learning to enhance development impact, particularly within large-scale and long-term programmes. Chaired by Fariha Ahmed and moderated by Aniruddha Brahmachari, the discussion emphasised grounding evaluation in institutional realities, administrative systems, and socio-economic contexts to improve decision-making. Binitesh Kumar highlighted that while evaluation is often retrospective, its real value lies in informing ongoing and future decisions, stressing the importance of mid-term evaluations for course correction in projects such as large infrastructure initiatives. Nidhi Chhibber underscored evaluation as a policy mandate requiring continuous assessment to ensure programme relevance within fixed timelines. Nidhi Chaudhary emphasised the importance of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, including field-based insights, to strengthen evidence. David Cuming contributed to discussions on evaluation types and their role in guiding strategic investments and sustainability, including approaches such as public-private partnerships. The session concluded that evaluation must move beyond accountability to become a continuous learning process—enabling adaptation, fostering collaboration, and generating timely, actionable insights to support sustainable and context-responsive development outcomes.

Plenary 3: Inclusion of Youth and Gender in Evaluation

Panelists: Daaliya Sebastian, UN Women, IEO (Chair); Arjan De Haan, Programme Lead, IDRC; Maaïke Bijker, Chief of Evidence, UNICEF India; Aalia Bhaladar and Jayanti Pushkaran, Empower; Victoria Kahla, Program Manager, World YWCA Rise Up! Initiative, Asia & Pacific; Ana Erika Larez, Chair, EvalYouth Global Network

Moderator: Jahnvi Andharia, ISST

Session Snapshot: This session focused on shifting power to young women by placing them at the centre of evaluation and decision-making processes, moving beyond tokenistic participation towards leadership, co-creation, and influence. Chaired by Daaliya Sebastian and moderated by Jahnvi Andharia, the discussion highlighted the need to transform institutional power structures to enable meaningful inclusion. Arjan De Haan drew attention to how funding priorities shape evaluation processes and reflect broader socio-economic agendas, while Maaïke Bijker emphasised rigour and clarity in grant design and evaluation-linked funding. Aalia Bhaladar challenged conventional approaches by advocating for young people's active role in designing tools and shaping budgets, and Jayanti Pushkaran highlighted evaluation as a dialogue that must lead to action. Victoria Kahla underscored lived experiences as valid evidence, linking grassroots realities to advocacy, while Ana Erika Larez stressed the need for flexible, youth-friendly evaluation frameworks to engage diverse and marginalised groups. The session concluded that meaningful inclusion requires a shift in both systems and mindsets—positioning young women as decision-makers, valuing lived experiences, and adopting participatory approaches to create more inclusive, democratic, and impactful evaluation practices.





TECHNICAL SESSIONS

📍 LADY IRWIN COLLEGE, NEW DELHI

1. Learning Circle: Re-centering citizens/communities in development & evaluation

Chair: *Rituu B Nanda*, Participatory Program Advisor, South Asia, Global Fund for Children.

Facilitators: *Student-led panel*

Session Snapshot: The session challenged traditional evaluation approaches that position communities as passive participants. It emphasised a shift towards co-ownership models where communities define indicators, generate evidence, and lead evaluation processes. Through the “Salt Approach,” the discussion illustrated how collective dialogue and self-evaluation enables communities to identify issues, design solutions, and manage change. The session also highlighted the distinction between community-based and community-led programmes, underscoring the importance of participation, trust, and shared accountability. Overall, it reinforced that evaluation must move towards participatory, community-led approaches that redefine power dynamics and position communities as active agents of their own development.

2. World YWCA Feminist Consultation Methodology – Community-led Accountability in Practice

Panelists: *Victoria Kahla*, Programme Manager, World YWCA Rise Up! Initiative, Asia and Pacific (**Chair**); *Aarushi Khanna*, Asia Pacific Regional Lead, Equal Measures 2030; *Vrushali Kadam*, Co-Founder, Community Care Collective; *Charu Narang*, Founder, Deaf Women Too (DWT); *Alpaxee Kashyap*, Founding Core Member, GENSA & Associate, Elevating Voices for Change (EV4C).

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined how evaluation can move beyond extractive models towards feminist, community-led approaches that centre lived experiences and accountability. It highlighted the Feminist Consultation Methodology (FCM) as a process where communities act as co-creators, shaping research questions, indicators, and interpretation of findings. The approach was framed as a decolonial shift that validates personal narratives as legitimate evidence, supported by participatory tools such as Spider Web Metrics and the Most Significant Change technique for collective sense-making. It also underscored accessibility challenges, particularly for marginalised groups, and the need for inclusive communication systems. Overall, it reinforced that evaluation must prioritise power-sharing, trust-building, and community leadership to drive meaningful, transformative change.

3. Inclusive and Participatory Evaluation: Youth, Gender, and Communities

Panelists: *Arjan de Haan*, Senior Program Specialist, IDRC (**Chair**); *Amrita Gupta*, *Sonakshi Agarwal*, *Subhasis Chakraborty*, *Apoorva Aggarwal*; *Yadharshika Selvaraj*; *Kashish*, *Dr. Masot Zingkhai*; *MD Ehtesham*; *Darvi Joneja*

Session Snapshot: The session explored how evaluation can centre youth agency, gender equity, and participatory approaches. It highlighted the use of flexible methodologies such as Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting to capture non-linear change in youth-led programmes. Case studies demonstrated how digital advocacy and AI-supported evaluation can address issues like period poverty, while research on girls in STEM revealed the influence of gender norms and aspiration gaps. The session also showcased peer-led participatory research with adolescent girls as co-researchers. Overall, it reinforced that inclusive, youth-led evaluation approaches generate deeper insights and drive meaningful, systemic social change.

4. Navigating the Knot – Real Stories of Integrating Gender and Systems Thinking in Evaluation

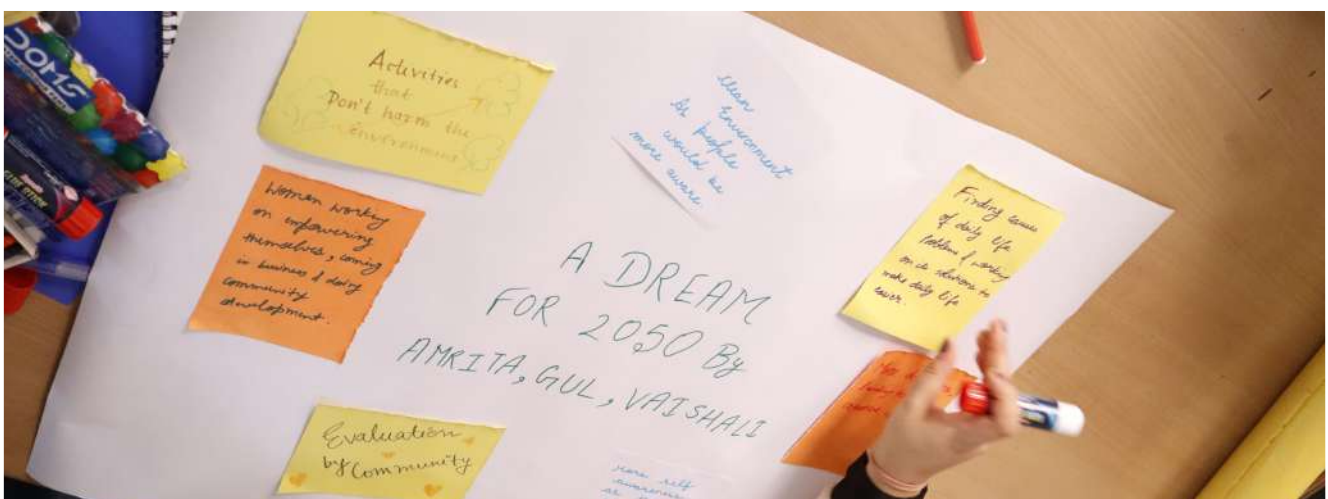
Panelists: *Amrita Gupta*, Independent Evaluation Consultant (**Chair**); *Biplab Nandy*, Consultant Gr II DMEQ; *Sudarsana Kundu*, Co-founder and Executive Director Gender Sphere, Managing Trustee, Gender at Work India; *Sonal Zaveri*, Founder GENSA; *Heera*, Director, Program, India, Empower, The Emerging Markets Foundation.

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined how gender analysis and systems thinking can be integrated into evaluation, moving beyond linear, project-based approaches towards adaptive, context-sensitive frameworks. It highlighted the need to address power dynamics, intersectionality, and institutional realities, while distinguishing between gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches. Emphasis was placed on how unpaid care work, social norms, and systemic barriers shape women's participation and agency. The conversation also underscored aligning organisational practices with programme interventions, recognising that change is often gradual. It highlighted challenges such as donor-driven reporting and institutional resistance, advocating for flexible, participatory approaches that value processes, learning, and micro-level shifts.

5. Measuring What Matters – Evaluating Healthcare Programs for Better Health Systems

Panelists: *Tansi Nayak*, Vice President, ALVL Foundation (**Chair**); *Granthika Chatterjee*, Engagement Manager, Sattva Consulting; *Chandni Noronha*, Partner, Bridgespan's India; *Anuradha Katyal*, Deputy VP, Public Health Practice, Sambodhi; *Ankur Mutreja*, Director, External Affairs and Health Security, South Asia, PATH

Session Snapshot: The discussion focused on strengthening evaluation practices within complex healthcare systems, highlighting the need for equity-centred, adaptive, and action-oriented approaches. It emphasised that healthcare operates as a multi-stakeholder ecosystem, requiring evaluation to inform real-time decision-making rather than remain retrospective. The role of combining historical and real-time data with digital tools, including AI, was underscored, alongside the importance of strong data systems and contextual understanding. The conversation stressed that equity must remain central, and that imperfect data should not delay action. It also highlighted the role of community engagement and participatory communication in strengthening accountability. Additionally, the need to distinguish between core and adaptable programme elements for scaling, and to translate findings into policy and financial language, was emphasised.



6. Innovations for Impact and Learning Loops

Panelists: *Aparna Khanna*, Lady Irwin College (**Chair**); *Sattva Vasavada*, *Sarbani Bose*; *Kahani Arya*, *Debadrita Chakraborty*; *Swapna Nixon*, *Kirti Gupta*, *Arpita Chakraborty*; *Shrabanti Sen*, *Pratibha Pandey*, *Puspita Datta*

Session Snapshot: The discussion focused on innovative evaluation models that strengthen gender integration by moving beyond output-based metrics to capture process, complexity, and real-time learning. It highlighted frameworks such as the Gender Integration Measurement Framework (GIMF), which assesses dimensions like capacity, ownership, and decision-making through process-based tracking and learning loops. The PACE model was presented as an approach to evaluate behavioural aspects such as knowledge, strategy, and risk-taking, going beyond binary outcomes. Sectoral insights, including a textile waste case study, demonstrated how adaptive evaluation can capture both environmental and economic dimensions. Overall, the session underscored that process-based, flexible approaches are essential to bridge the gap between programme design and implementation, enabling deeper insights and more meaningful impact.

7. Social Norms and Behaviour Change Evaluations

Panelists: *Sushmita Mukherjee*, Independent Consultant (**Chair**); *Sonal Garg*, Research Specialist, Centre for Social and Behaviour Change, Ashoka University; *Vikas Choudhry*, Independent Consultant; *Mridusmita Bordolo*, Lead Economist, IWWAGE; *Vidya Raghavan*, Chief Executive Officer, New Concept

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined how social norms shape behaviour and how evaluation can capture these complex dynamics. It highlighted that norms operate through social approval and sanctions, requiring approaches that go beyond attitudes to understand deeper community expectations. The importance of participatory, context-sensitive, and mixed-method methodologies was emphasised. A gender lens underscored how entrenched norms influence women's empowerment and participation. The session also addressed ethical risks, including backlash and participant safety, stressing careful engagement. Overall, it reinforced that evaluating behaviour change requires adaptive, ethically grounded approaches rooted in local context and social realities.

8. Building Capacities and Preparing for the Job Market in the Evaluation Sector

Panelists: *Aparna Khanna*, Lady Irwin College (**Chair**); *Jigme Sonam*, Co-Lead EvalYouth Asia; *Pratik Jawale*, Co-Lead EYA; *Nidhi Prabha*, Senior Manager, Capacity Building, Sambodhi; *Payal Mulchandani*, Co-Founder & Head of Business Development & Data Analytics, 4th Wheel and *Rajesh Khanna*, Director, IBU, Athena Infonomics

Session Snapshot: The discussion focused on preparing young professionals for careers in evaluation by emphasising the need to combine technical skills with practical experience. Core competencies such as research design, data analysis, and proposal writing must be complemented by field exposure through internships, volunteering, and networking. It highlighted the gap between academic training and industry expectations, stressing the role of mentorship and peer learning in building confidence. The growing importance of technology and AI was noted, alongside the need for ethical application. Overall, continuous learning, adaptability, and strong professional networks were identified as key to building a successful career in the evaluation sector.

9. AI in Food and Agriculture Systems: Evidence and Implications from LMICs

Panelists: *Rohan Shah*, Senior Evaluation Specialist, 3ie (**Chair**); *Monisha Lakshminarayanan*, Principal Consultant, Athena Infonomics; *Zeba Siddiqui*, Senior Consultant, Athena Infonomics; *Francis Xavier Rathinam*, Senior Director, Athena Infonomics; *Ashrita Saran*, Director, Evaluation and Evidence Synthesis, Global Development Network.

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined the role of AI in transforming food and agriculture systems in LMICs, highlighting both its potential and limitations. It emphasised that while AI shows promise in improving productivity and reducing costs, evidence on long-term impacts on livelihoods and food security remains limited. The conversation underscored significant equity gaps, with minimal focus on gender, digital access, and socio-economic disparities. Adoption challenges such as low trust, weak infrastructure, and institutional readiness were also highlighted. It stressed that AI must be embedded within local systems and supported by governance and policy frameworks. Overall, AI should complement human-led systems, ensuring inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation.

10. Aligning & Advancing Global Evaluation Agenda (GEA) 2.0: Enabling Environment, Organisational Capacities, and Synergies

Panelists: *Rajib Nandi*, Chairperson, Community of Evaluators South Asia (COE-SA) (**Chair**); *Chelladurai Solomon*, Vice President, International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE); *Phuntsho Choden*, President, Evaluation Association Bhutan (EAB); *Yoko Ishida*, President, Asia Pacific Evaluation Association; *Sonal Zaveri*, Gender & Equity Network South Asia (GENSA); *Arshee Rizvi*, EvalYouth India

Session Snapshot: The discussion explored the Global Evaluation Agenda (GEA) 2.0 as a framework for strengthening evaluation systems in response to global polycrises, including inequality, climate change, and political instability. It highlighted four key dimensions—enabling environment, institutional capacity, individual capacity, and synergy—supported by the Three Horizons approach to guide long-term transformation. The conversation traced the evolution of GEA and emphasised practical strategies such as partnerships, capacity-building, and identifying champions to operationalise the agenda. It underscored the importance of values-driven, systems-oriented, and pluralistic evaluation, while cautioning against reverting to compliance-based models. Overall, it reinforced that GEA 2.0 requires collective action and alignment across institutions to drive meaningful impact.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation in Emergencies – Lessons from Sri Lanka

Panelists: *Rupa Upadhyay*, Lady Irwin College (**Chair**); *Amil Epa*, Institute for Participatory Interaction Development (IPID); *Irasha Jayasekara*, *Yadharshika Selvaraj* & *Asinsala Wijerathne*; *Center for Evaluation, University of Sri Jayewardenepura*; *Jigme Sonam*, Co-Lead, EvalYouth Asia

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined monitoring and evaluation practices during emergency contexts, drawing lessons from a “double shock” scenario involving economic crisis and natural disaster. It highlighted the need for adaptive, real-time M&E systems incorporating beneficiary verification, post-distribution monitoring, grievance mechanisms, and digital tools such as dashboards and GIS. The role of youth volunteers in data collection, trust-building, and feedback systems was emphasised, supported by technology for rapid coordination. Challenges such as digital divides, limited capacity, and coordination gaps were also noted. Overall, it reinforced that robust, technology-enabled M&E systems are critical for timely decision-making, accountability, and effective humanitarian response in crisis situations.



12. Next Generation M&E: Technology, AI, and Ethical Futures – Multiple Perspectives

Panelists: *Sanjay Kumar*, Population Dynamics Specialist, UNFPA (**Chair**); *EKPIM Jayasekara*; *Farheen Rizvi*; *Dimuthu Daluwatte*, *S. Sivakumar*; *Mahima Taneja*, *Deepti*; *Rana Tawfik*

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined how next-generation technologies, including AI, digital platforms, and participatory monitoring systems, are reshaping evaluation while raising critical ethical concerns. It highlighted the potential of AI-assisted methods to enhance reach and efficiency, while emphasising persistent challenges such as stigma, privacy, and sustainability. The concept of hybrid intelligence—combining AI with human judgement—was underscored as essential for responsible practice. The session also stressed the value of participatory approaches in strengthening community ownership and long-term impact. Concerns around digital and data divides were raised, noting risks of exclusion and bias. Overall, it reinforced that technological innovation must be grounded in ethics, inclusion, and contextual understanding.

13. Strengthening the Evidence Ecosystem & its Role in Enhancing State Capacity in India

Panelists: *Maaïke Bijker*, Chief of Evidence, UNICEF India (**Chair**); *Radha Ashrit*, DDG, DMEQ, NITI Aayog; *Anoop Sharma*, Evaluation Specialist, IFAD-Rome; *Alok Mishra*, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India; *Vijay Avinandan*, M&E Officer, World Food Programme.

Session Snapshot: The discussion examined how India's evidence ecosystem can be strengthened to better support policy design, implementation, and decision-making. It emphasised a systems-level approach built on skills, systems, and standards, alongside the need for collaboration and behavioural change. The conversation highlighted that evidence must be integrated from the design stage, supported by strong data governance, real-time monitoring, and participatory approaches to ensure ownership and usability. It underscored that the key challenge lies not in the availability of evidence, but in its effective use in decision-making. Overall, the session reinforced that evidence must be actionable, context-specific, and aligned with policy processes to enhance state capacity and governance.

14. Decentralised Institutionalisation of Evaluation at the State Level

Panelists: *Abinash Dash*, Director, DMEQ, NITI Aayog (**Chair**); *Ishika Kumar*, M&E Specialist, States & Capacity Building, DMEQ, NITI Aayog; *K. Subramaniam*, Member, Rajya NITI Aayog, Chhattisgarh, Government of Chhattisgarh; *Ashish Sahu*, Director & Head, Manav Rachna Center for Capacity Building & Consultancy, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions; *Gaurang D. Rami*, Professor & Head, Department of Economics, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat

Session Snapshot: The discussion focused on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems at the state level through decentralisation, capacity building, and data-driven governance. It highlighted the shift from centralised approaches to state-led systems, enabling greater ownership and contextual relevance. The use of digital tools and dashboards for real-time monitoring was emphasised, alongside collaborations with academic and knowledge institutions. The session identified key challenges such as limited technical capacity and weak institutional mandates, underscoring the need for structured capacity-building efforts. It stressed moving beyond compliance-based audits to assessing real programme impact. Overall, decentralised, well-capacitated systems were seen as essential for improving governance and enabling evidence-based decision-making.

15. Narratives and Storytelling for Change – Multiple Perspectives

Panelists: Kaustuv Bandopadhyay, Director, PRIA (**Chair**); Swati Batra, Tanisha Arora; Ragni Nathani; Asinsala Wijerathne, M. Suchira Suranga, Suneha Kandpal; Radhika Dayal

Session Snapshot: The discussion explored the power of narratives and storytelling as tools for social change, highlighting their role in shaping identities, influencing discourse, and informing policy. It emphasised storytelling as a rigorous, methodological approach that reveals transformation beyond measurable indicators, particularly in contexts of gender-based violence and marginalisation. Participatory approaches, including art and action research, were highlighted as ways to shift communities from silence to advocacy and co-creation of evidence. The use of AI-assisted qualitative tools was also discussed in analysing sensitive issues. Overall, the session reinforced that narratives centre lived experiences, uncover hidden power structures, and enable more inclusive, contextually grounded, and transformative evaluation practices.



INNOVATION BAZAAR

Innovation Bazaar have been a static component of EvalFest events since beginning. The bazaar provides an opportunity to the participants to share their learnings and experience with the fellow participants and have resourceful conversations on the subjects.

The session took place in an interactive stall setup, focusing on innovative training methods and improving quality through structured planning and techniques. The session explained how new and creative tools can be used in training and fieldwork to improve outcomes. Below are the kiosks organised by the participants for the Innovation bazaar.

Empowering Indigenous Communities through Culturally Responsive Evaluation (Bhutan Initiative)

Presenter: *Dr Phuntsho Choden (Chair)*, Evaluation Association Bhutan
Jigme Sonam, Vice President, Evaluation Association Bhutan

This kiosk demonstrated a culturally grounded evaluation approach rooted in indigenous knowledge systems in Bhutan, emphasising community-led definitions of development and success. Through interactive elements such as traditional artefacts and QR-enabled resources, it demonstrated how evaluation can be embedded within cultural contexts to enhance ownership, participation, and relevance, positioning communities as active agents in shaping and assessing development processes.

Survivor-Driven, Trauma-Informed Engagement in Human Trafficking Research: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Pakistan

Presenter: *Jyoti Nayak* (Athena Infonomics)

This kiosk presented a cross-country study on human trafficking, focusing on survivor-centred and trauma-informed research methodologies. It underscored the importance of ethical, context-sensitive approaches in addressing issues such as stigma, underreporting, and structural barriers, while highlighting the value of mixed-methods research in generating credible evidence to inform policy and funding decisions.

Child-Centred Storytelling for Change: Building Evidence to Support Thailand's Child Trafficking and Anti-Trafficking Responses

Presenter: *Athena Infonomics*

This kiosk presented innovative child-centred evaluation methodologies to address child trafficking in Thailand. Using participatory tools such as storytelling, emotion cards, visual storyboards, spin wheel activity and other interactive activities, the session demonstrated how children's perspectives can be captured safely and meaningfully. The research was conducted in various regional languages and many experts participated in this study. One of the major discussions was on effective dissemination of the data collected.

Nurturing Leaders for India's Development (IIC)

Presenter: Umesh Jadhav & Himanshu Burad, International Innovation Corps (IIC)

This kiosk highlighted leadership development through fellowship programmes and competency-based training models for frontline workers. The fellowship supports youth in policy, research, and system strengthening through hands-on field engagement to map competencies, deliver targeted training, and assess knowledge and practical skills. The session highlighted how structured learning and real world testing together help convert training into measurable performance improvement and help in scaling across sectors and geographies.

OutKompass: A Design- Led, Outcome Monitoring Framework for Social Impact

Presenter: Anamika Gupta, Meena Vaidyanathan and Rijul Jain, Niiti Consulting

The kiosk introduced a design-led impact intelligence tool that enables grassroots organisations to move beyond simple activity tracking to systems-level outcomes through a three-tiered digital approach – a Feasibility Tool, OutKompass Design and the OutKompass Pulse real-time Dashboard. By integrating design thinking with real-time data analytics, the presenters provided a framework where funders and implementers stay on the same page. The session stated that the 'Productive Discomfort' generated by identifying missing data is the first step towards building credible, scalable social interventions.

Designing Intentional Bricolage in MEL

Presenter: Outcome Mapping Learning Community

This kiosk explored bricolage as a structured and intentional approach to combining multiple methods in monitoring and evaluation systems and its relevance in addressing complexity within development programmes. It emphasised the importance of context, inclusion, and transparency in method selection, demonstrating how it strengthens rigour and responsiveness in complex evaluation environments. A structured framework for designing intentional bricolage was presented in three interconnected layers - Foundation (Values & Principles), The Bridge (Process Holder – Evaluator) and Design Action (Top Layer) to enhance both institutional transparency and overall effectiveness of the evaluation.

Feminist Evaluation Toolkit for Crisis Contexts

Presenter: Rai Sengupta (UNICEF Evaluation Office)

This kiosk introduced a globally developed toolkit designed to integrate feminist principles into evaluation in crisis settings. It highlighted the importance of addressing exclusion, ensuring accessibility, and using modular tools and participatory methods to make evaluation processes more inclusive, ethical, and responsive to marginalised groups.

AILYZE – AI-Based Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

This kiosk showcased AILYZE, an AI-powered tool for qualitative data analysis, demonstrating features such as coding, thematic analysis, and frequency tracking across large datasets. It highlighted the efficiency gains offered by AI while emphasising the continued need for human validation and critical interpretation in research processes.

YWCA – Women’s Empowerment & Engagement

Presenter: YWCA

This kiosk highlighted YWCA’s work in promoting women’s empowerment through livelihood generation, skill-building, and leadership development. Through interactive activities, it demonstrated how combining economic independence with community engagement and advocacy can strengthen participation and create sustainable impact.

Outline India – Data & AI for Social Impact

Presenter: Outline India

This kiosk showcased the use of large-scale primary data and AI-enabled tools to support policy and development interventions, particularly in rural contexts. It highlighted the importance of combining field-based methods such as FGDs and IDIs with technology to improve data accuracy, transparency, and scalability, enabling more effective and evidence-driven decision-making. The kiosk reinforced the importance of combining traditional and AI-enabled methods to generate reliable, actionable insights for development.





Winning stalls by Umesh Jadhav, Rai Sengupta and Hieffer International (Imran Syed and Ritesh Laddha)



POSTER PRESENTATION

The poster presentations at EvalFest 2026 were an interactive platform to showcase diverse evaluation approaches, foster peer learning, and enable dialogue between practitioners, researchers, and participants. The presentations highlighted mixed-method evaluations, feminist approaches, storytelling in evidence-building, youth-led evaluation, and lessons from failed experiments across different sectors such as agriculture, gender empowerment, adolescent SRHR, direct cash transfers, and nutrition interventions.

The common thread across all posters was the integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence to understand impact beyond numbers and to strengthen program design and policy relevance.

Below is the list of presentations at EvalFest 2026

1. **Empowerment of the Farmers Through the Sankalp Program** – Bhupender, M3M Foundation
2. **Small Booth, Big Change: How Zaytoon's Women-Led Model is Bringing Digital Services to Rural Bangladesh** – Garima Singh, FinValue
3. **Capturing Stories Beyond Numbers** – Shivangi Singh, Project-DEEP
4. **FAYA – A Comprehensive Sexuality Education Intervention to Improve SRHR Outcomes Among Adolescents in Rajasthan, India** – Radhika Dayal & Shilpi Rampal, Population Council Consulting Pvt. Ltd., India
5. **The Value of Failed Experiments: What a Nutrition Pilot in Nashik Taught Us About Evidence, Context, and Scale** – Mayur Narute, Fortify Health

The session witnessed active audience interaction at the kiosks, with participants engaging directly with presenters. Discussions focused on methodological approaches, interpretation of findings, and the role of evaluation in capturing complex social change processes. The presentations emphasised that effective evaluation goes beyond measuring outputs. Sustainable impact requires understanding context, behavioural shifts, gender dynamics, and implementation realities. Integrating stories with data leads to deeper insights and more responsive program design





About the Organisers



Evaluation Community of India (ECOI)

The Evaluation Community of India (ECOI), established in 2015, is a voluntary professional association committed to advancing evaluation practice and strengthening evidence-based decision-making. It brings together evaluators, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and academics to promote equity-focused and inclusive approaches to development. Since 2018, ECOI has organised EvalFest, its biennial conference that convenes national and international experts to discuss emerging trends, methodologies, and innovations in evaluation. Through its work, ECOI fosters collaboration, capacity-building, and knowledge-sharing, offering members access to networks, learning platforms, and resources that support a stronger and more responsive evaluation ecosystem in India.



EvalYouth India

EvalYouth India is a network of Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEEs) committed to strengthening evaluation practice in India. As part of the EvalYouth Global Network, it focuses on building the capacities, visibility, and leadership of young professionals in research, monitoring, and evaluation. The network brings together students, early-career researchers, and practitioners to promote evidence-based learning and improve development programmes. Through mentorship, peer learning, and collaboration, it bridges the gap between academic knowledge and practical experience. Working alongside national bodies, EvalYouth India fosters engagement with innovative, ethical, and participatory approaches, while creating platforms for youth voices in shaping the future of evaluation.



Department of Communications & Evaluations, Lady Irwin College

The Department of Development Communication & Extension at Lady Irwin College (University of Delhi) has played a pioneering role in advancing participatory and gender-responsive development since its establishment in 1964. Rooted in a strong legacy of community engagement and extension work, the department has evolved to integrate contemporary approaches in Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (ME&L), participatory communication, and social behaviour change. Its curriculum and research emphasise both qualitative and quantitative methods, preparing students to engage with real-world development challenges. With a focus on gender equity, social inclusion, and sustainable development, the department fosters critical thinking, field-based learning, and collaboration. Its partnerships and recognition in the evaluation ecosystem highlight its leadership in nurturing future professionals in development practice.



Institute of Social Studies Trust

The Department of Development Communication & Extension at Lady Irwin College (University of Delhi) has a rich legacy of advancing community engagement, gender equity, and participatory development since its establishment in 1964. Rooted in extension education, the department has evolved to integrate contemporary approaches in Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (ME&L), participatory communication, and social and behaviour change. Its multidisciplinary focus spans research, community mobilisation, and capacity-building, equipping students with both theoretical knowledge and field-based experience. With strong partnerships and recognition within the evaluation ecosystem, the department continues to play a key role in nurturing skilled professionals and promoting inclusive, evidence-based development practices.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the ECOI Core Group members, organising committee, and volunteers whose unwavering dedication and efforts have been instrumental in the successful organisation of this event. We appreciate the diligent work of the organizing committee, reviewers and volunteers.

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EvalFest 2026

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EvalFest 2026

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