

Know the Speakers

AI for Social Good – Impact that Works Seminar

February 17, 2026 | L2, Audi 2, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

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SPEAKERS

From Algorithms to Outcomes: Building AI that Works for People



Shri S. Krishnan

Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY), Government of India

An IAS officer with 35 years of experience, Shri S. Krishnan leads India's digital and technology agenda, advancing e-governance, electronics and semiconductor manufacturing, IT and ITeS, emerging technologies, R&D, and secure cyberspace to support India's transition to a developed and digitally empowered society. He has held senior leadership roles across the Government of India, Government of Tamil Nadu, and the International Monetary Fund, including Additional Chief Secretary for Finance and for Industries in Tamil Nadu, founding CEO of the Tamil Nadu Infrastructure Development Board, and Chair of the Fifth State Finance Commission. He has represented India in G20 expert groups and served in key central and district administration roles.



Michael Kremer

Nobel Laureate; J-PAL affiliated professor, University of Chicago

Michael Kremer is a co-recipient of the 2019 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics alongside J-PAL co-founders Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo. At the University of Chicago, he directs the Development Innovation Lab and serves as Faculty Director of the Development Economics Center. He is also an advisor for Evidence Action's AI for Good Projects. His honors include a MacArthur Fellowship, membership in the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Fellowship of the Econometric Society.



Iqbal Dhaliwal

Global Executive Director, J-PAL

Based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Iqbal Dhaliwal works with J-PAL's Board and regional leadership to set strategic direction and coordinate global research, policy outreach, capacity building, and operations. He co-directs J-PAL South Asia with Esther Duflo and co-chairs Project AI Evidence, which identifies the most promising avenues for applying AI in development and climate policy and rigorously evaluates AI applications. Since 2018, he has led a major expansion of J-PAL's sectors, initiatives, regional and country offices, partnerships, and funding, with programs evaluated by J-PAL now reaching over 850 million people worldwide.

AI in Health: Saving Lives at Scale

Researcher Presentation



Ziad Obermeyer

Associate Professor, University of California, Berkeley

Ziad Obermeyer works at the intersection of medicine and AI, exploring how data can transform health and health care. His research on algorithmic bias, which culminated in testimony before Congress, changed how hospitals around the world use AI for population health and how state attorneys-general hold AI accountable. He is currently a researcher on a project funded by J-PAL's Project AI Evidence initiative, which is evaluating an AI-based referral tool to predict silent heart attacks in India. Named one of TIME's 100 most influential people in AI, Ziad has co-founded Nightingale Open Science, a non-profit that democratizes access to medical imaging data, and Dandelion, a for-profit platform for AI innovation in healthcare. He practiced emergency medicine for 10 years and previously served on the faculty at Harvard Medical School.

Panel



Shahed Alam

Co-founder and Co-CEO, Noora Health

Shahed is committed to creating inclusive global health systems that recognize skilled caregivers as essential to better health outcomes. He focuses on program development, tech, research, and partnerships to build sustainable systems. Shahed received his Doctor of Medicine (MD) from Stanford University and is currently an associate faculty member at Ariadne Labs at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He was also a 2022 TED speaker, Audacious Project winner, and Skoll Foundation awardee.



Zameer Brey

Deputy Director, Technology Diffusion
Gates Foundation

Zameer Brey works at the Gates Foundation to help ensure AI is used equitably and safely to advance global health and development outcomes. His work spans building practical AI use cases, shaping responsible guardrails, and coordinating foundation-wide efforts to translate promising tools into solutions that actually reach people in low-resource settings. Before joining the foundation, he worked as a systems analyst and organizational turnaround specialist, and has advised and served on a range of health-related boards and committees in South Africa. Zameer earned his medical degree, MBA, PhD in health systems and innovation, and Master of Law from the University of Cape Town.



Rob Sherman

Vice President, Policy & Deputy Chief Privacy Officer, Meta

Rob Sherman leads privacy-related public policy strategy and works closely with product, engineering, and legal teams to build trust, transparency, and accountability across Meta's family of apps and technologies. Since joining Meta (formerly Facebook) in 2012, Rob has focused on protecting people's privacy, shaping responsible approaches to emerging technologies including artificial intelligence and virtual / augmented reality and engaging with policymakers and external stakeholders to advance frameworks for safe innovation. Before joining Meta, he practiced technology and privacy law at Covington & Burling LLP. Rob holds a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and a B.S. in Human-Computer Interaction from the University of Maryland, blending legal expertise with a strong grounding in tech and user experience.



Aimee Barnes

Policy Manager - Health, J-PAL

Aimee Barnes works in the Policy and Communications group to support partnerships with governments, NGOs, researchers, and technology partners, advancing the use of rigorous evidence in policymaking. Her work includes contributing to cross-cutting efforts on AI and other emerging tools, with a focus on how they perform in real-world settings and how risks can be managed as they scale. She has applied this work across sectors, including health, where she has contributed to evidence-informed analysis of how AI and related technologies can strengthen health systems. Previously, she supported J-PAL's Crime, Violence, and Conflict and Governance sectors. She joined J-PAL in 2020 and holds a Master's from University of California San Diego and a Bachelor's from University of California San Diego.

AI in Governance: Revolutionizing Government Efficiency

Researcher Presentation



Dean Karlan

Former Chief Economist, USAID; J-PAL affiliated professor, Northwestern University

Dean Karlan is the founder and former president of Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). He previously served as Chief Economist at USAID from 2022 to 2025, and sat on the executive committee of J-PAL's Board. His research uses experimental and behavioral economics to study poverty reduction, spanning topics such as financial inclusion, agriculture, entrepreneurship, health behavior, and charitable giving across more than 20 countries. He co-founded ImpactMatters and stickK.com, and has co-authored several influential books on evidence and development.

Panel



Shri Mohammed Y. Safirulla

Director, IndiaAI Mission, MeitY, Government of India

Shri Mohammad Y. Safirulla is a 2010-batch IAS officer and currently Director of the IndiaAI Mission under MeitY. Previously, he has driven digital transformation and public service delivery through leadership positions including District Collector & Magistrate of Ernakulam, Project Director of eHealth Kerala, Director of the Kerala State IT Mission, and senior roles in GST administration. He holds a B.E. in Electrical & Electronics Engineering (PSG College of Technology), MBA in Finance (T.A. Pai Management Institute), M.S. in Public Policy & Management (Carnegie Mellon University), and a MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School, with additional specialization in machine learning.



Utkarsh Saxena

Co-founder and CEO, Adalat AI

Utkarsh Saxena is working to transform the justice system through AI-driven solutions, including voice transcription tools designed to reduce case backlogs and improve accuracy in legal proceedings. His work is shaped by deep, first-hand experience across the legal system: he has served as a law clerk at the Supreme Court of India, practiced across Indian courts, petitioned the Supreme Court for marriage equality, and worked with government and policy institutions on court reform. Utkarsh holds a BA / LLB from the University of Delhi, an LLM from Harvard Law School as an Inlaks scholar, a Master's from the Harvard Kennedy School, and is completing a PhD in Public Policy from the University of Oxford. He has previously worked as junior counsel as well as in the Chief Economic Adviser's office at the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, and the Boston Consulting Group.



Robyn Scott

Co-Founder & CEO, Apolitical

Robyn Scott co-founded Apolitical to help public servants find, learn from, and scale what works in government by connecting innovators across countries and building practical learning programs that strengthen state capacity. Her work is shaped by a career as a mission-driven entrepreneur and writer focused on solving real delivery challenges, from improving public-sector performance to launching impact-oriented ventures in Southern Africa. Robyn is also active in global conversations on government innovation and responsible technology, including as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and a Gates Scholar. She holds a BSc in Bioinformatics from the University of Auckland and an MPhil in Bioscience Enterprise from the University of Cambridge.



Kapil Viswanathan

President, IFMR

Kapil Viswanathan is the President of IFMR and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee at Krea University. Previously, Kapil was the founder and CEO of a large content services company, employing over 2000 people across India, Europe and the US. After exiting the company, Kapil dedicated himself to the inspiring cause of establishing Krea University. Earlier in his career, he led global sales for a division of Tata Consultancy Services, and served on the corporate think tank. Kapil is the President of the Institute for Financial Management and Research, a 48-year old not-for-profit society, focused on education and research, and which is the sponsoring body of Krea University. He serves on the Council of Directors of the Kodaikanal International School, a 117-year old institution which was the first of its kind in India. Kapil holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and an MS in Management Science and Engineering from Stanford University.

AI in Work: Humans, AI, or Both?

Researcher Presentation



David Yanagizawa-Drott

J-PAL affiliated professor, University of Zurich

David Yanagizawa-Drott co-chairs the Project AI Evidence (PAIE) at J-PAL, which identifies, evaluates, and scales innovative applications of AI for social good and poverty reduction. He also co-organizes the annual Zurich Workshop on AI and Economics, bringing together economists working on both AI tools in empirical research and the economic impacts of AI in society. David's broader research spans development economics and political economy, with a focus on how culture and norms shape labour markets for men and women, the role of social media in society, and the development and testing of scalable solutions to pressing challenges in developing countries through rapid experimentation, including work under the Social Catalyst Lab. He previously taught at Harvard University's Kennedy School and holds a PhD in Economics from Stockholm University.

Panel



Becky Faith

Senior Research Fellow, FCDO

Senior Research Fellow, IDS

Becky Faith works at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, and at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), on how AI and digital systems can strengthen public services while also widening exclusion if they are not designed and governed carefully. As a research lead at the ESRC Digital Futures at Work Research Centre (DIGIT), Becky co-leads research examining how AI and other digital technologies are changing people's working lives, especially the impacts on job quality, inequality, and who is included or excluded from new forms of work. Her work is shaped by more than two decades across research, policy, and advocacy in digital development and digital rights, with a focus on who

gets left out, why, and what it takes to make technology work for marginalized communities in practice. Becky holds a PhD in Computing/Communications and an MSc in Technology Strategy and Policy Research from The Open University.



Elizabeth Kelly

Head, Beneficial Deployments
Anthropic

Elizabeth Kelly works at the intersection of AI and public benefit, focused on ensuring that AI benefits all humanity by expanding its responsible and inclusive use across society. She was previously the founding Director of the U.S. AI Safety Institute at the U.S. Department of Commerce, where she collaborated with the US government to ensure that AI systems remain secure and ethical. She has also served as Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy at the White House National Economic Council, as senior policy advisor on the Biden-Harris Transition Team and in the Obama White House. Elizabeth holds a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from Yale Law School, an MSc in Comparative Social Policy from the University of Oxford, and a Bachelor's from Duke University. She was recognized by TIME as one of the 100 most influential people in AI in 2024.



Shankar Maruwada

Co-Founder and CEO, EkStep Foundation

At the EkStep Foundation, Shankar Maruwada has helped build open digital infrastructure to improve access to quality education for millions of children across India. Under his leadership, EkStep has worked closely with state education systems to embed technology into existing learning ecosystems, including the use of QR codes in textbooks and the development of Sunbird, an open-source digital platform for learning that enables trusted, contextual, and scalable content delivery. Previously, Shankar led demand generation and marketing for Aadhaar, India's national identification program, and co-founded Marketics, pioneering data analytics in India. He is an active investor and mentor to startups. Shankar is

an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.



Murugan Vasudevan

CEO, Veddis Foundation

Murugan Vasudevan is the CEO of Veddis Foundation. Veddis invests in organizations working at the intersection of tech, policy, and social impact. Veddis also partners with governments on policy implementation, effective public service delivery and governance. Previously, Murugan led Cisco's social innovations group, investing and building solutions in the areas of critical human needs, education, and economic empowerment. Prior to his move to the impact ecosystem, he helped build several multi-million dollar businesses for Cisco as part of the emerging solutions group. Murugan is an Aspire Circle Fellow, is on the boards of Kyro.ai, Common Purpose and Leadership for Equity, on the governing council of J-PAL ASPIRE, and advises several social impact startups on strategy and partnerships.

AI Vishwaguru: Catalyzing Learning and Impact



Shri Abhishek Singh

CEO, India AI Mission; Additional Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
Government of India

Overseeing India's AI and Emerging Technologies agenda, including Cyber Security and Digital Skilling, Shri Abhishek Singh leads the IndiaAI Mission with a focus on building Indian foundation models, scalable applications, trusted datasets, and a strong AI workforce. A 1995-batch IAS officer, he has been shaping AI policy and Digital India initiatives since 2018 and has played a key role in developing India's national, seven-pillar, whole-of-government AI strategy. Previously, he served as CEO of Karmayogi Bharat in the Department of Personnel and Training, and as CEO of National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Digital India Corporation (DIC), and MyGov in MeitY, advancing technology-driven public service delivery. He holds an MPA from Harvard Kennedy School and is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.



Maggie Johnson

Global Head, Google.org

Maggie Johnson is the Global Head and Vice President of Google.org, Google's philanthropic arm. Google.org brings the best of Google to organizations around the globe through providing funding and technical expertise to accelerate their missions. It is a funding partner for J-PAL's PAIE initiative. Previously, Maggie served as Vice President of Education at Google and as Director of Educational Affairs at Stanford University. She holds a PhD from City University of New York and a Masters of Arts from New York University as well as Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Early Music Performance. Before entering the philanthropy and technology sectors, she was a professional musician.



Iqbal Dhaliwal

Global Executive Director, J-PAL

Based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Iqbal Dhaliwal works with J-PAL's Board and regional leadership to set strategic direction and coordinate global research, policy outreach, capacity building, and operations. He co-directs J-PAL South Asia with Esther Duflo and co-chairs Project AI Evidence, which identifies the most promising avenues for applying AI in development and climate policy and rigorously evaluates AI applications. Since 2018, he has led a major expansion of J-PAL's sectors, initiatives, regional and country offices, partnerships, and funding, with programs evaluated by J-PAL now reaching over 850 million people worldwide.

AI in Climate and Agriculture: Building Resilient Communities

Researcher Presentation



Maulik Jagnani

J-PAL Invited Researcher and Assistant Professor,
Tufts University

Maulik Jagnani is an economist whose research examines how environmental conditions and climate-related risks shape productivity, health, and human capital in lower-income countries. Using experimental and quasi-experimental methods, his work studies air pollution, temperature, and environmental policy across settings such as firms, households, schools, and agriculture. He is currently researching the impact of AI-enabled community-based flood early warning systems in rural India. He holds a PhD in Applied Economics from Cornell University and has previously held academic appointments at the University of Colorado Denver and Yale University's Economic Growth Center.

Panel



Fatema AlMulla

Senior Specialist, Development, International Affairs
Office, UAE Presidential Court

Fatema AlMulla advances the UAE Presidential Court's international development work at the intersection of food security, climate resilience, and innovation. She helps translate global partnerships into practical programs that move ideas from pilot to scale, including convening startups, researchers, and public-sector leaders around emerging agri-tech solutions. Her work is shaped by experience spanning sustainability communications and delivery, including work with Masdar and the UAE's national food security efforts, where she supported research and development and engagement with international partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Fatema holds a Master

of Environmental Management (Sustainable Development) from the University of Queensland and a Bachelor's degree in Business Marketing from the American University of Sharjah.



George Richards

Director, Community Jameel

George Richards leads Community Jameel, an independent global organization advancing science to help communities thrive. Community Jameel is a partner of J-PAL in the AI Evidence Alliance for Social Impact (AEASI), an initiative driving evidence-informed deployment of AI solutions for social good in Africa and Asia. Prior to becoming Director in 2020, George led strategy for the organization from 2015. Previously, he has headed heritage programs at Art Jameel, served as the Special Rapporteur for Cultural Heritage to the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, and worked as a specialist assessor for the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund. He holds a First in Arabic and Persian from the University of Edinburgh and is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and a trustee of The Prince's Foundation.



Niriksha Shetty

CEO, Precision Development

Niriksha Shetty leads Precision Development in using data, behavioral science, and digital tools to deliver practical, tailored advice at scale—especially for smallholder farmers and other communities facing high-stakes decisions. Her work is shaped by years of building and running programs that translate rigorous evidence into services people actually use, partnering with governments and frontline organizations across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Before Precision Development, she worked with J-PAL South Asia and LEAD at Krea University. Niriksha holds a Master of Public Administration in International Development from Harvard Kennedy School and a BA in Economics and Mathematics from Franklin & Marshall College.



Veena Srinivasan

Executive Director, WELL Labs

Veena Srinivasan leads WELL Labs in turning water and climate research into real-world action, building partnerships that help cities, communities, and governments manage scarce water more sustainably. Her work is shaped by two decades studying how water systems actually function on the ground, from urban water security and groundwater dependence to the policy and institutional choices that determine who gets reliable access. She is known for bridging rigorous socio-hydrology with practical implementation, helping translate evidence into solutions that can scale. Veena holds a PhD from Stanford University's Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources, a Master's in Energy and Environmental Studies from Boston University, and a BTech in Engineering Physics from the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

AI in Education: Customizing Learning for All

Researcher Presentation



Samantha Carter

Senior Policy Manager - AI, J-PAL

Samantha leads J-PAL's Project AI Evidence (PAIE), bringing together researchers, governments, nonprofits, and technology companies to identify, rigorously evaluate, and help scale AI applications with the greatest potential for social good, while also addressing risks, across sectors such as education, health, labor markets, climate, and financial inclusion. Before joining J-PAL in 2025, Samantha was a Senior Advisor in USAID's Office of the Chief Economist, advising a \$300 million portfolio on improving the cost-effectiveness of food security, resilience, and education programs. She has worked on digital tools for smallholder farmers at Precision Development and in evidence-based philanthropy at Founders Pledge and the JBJ Foundation. She holds a Master's from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a Bachelor's from Johns Hopkins University.



Thiago Rached

Co-founder & CEO, Letrus

Thiago Rached leads Letrus, an AI-based literacy program addressing foundational writing gaps among K-12 students in Brazil. Under his leadership, Letrus has delivered exceptional learning gains, including an AI-powered essay scoring tool evaluated in collaboration with J-PAL-affiliated researchers. His work has been internationally recognized, with Letrus named the world's best education technology by UNESCO in 2020. Prior to this, he worked as a venture capital investor across education, healthcare, and e-commerce. Thiago holds a Master's degree from Columbia University and a Bachelor's from Universidade de São Paulo.

Panel



Rukmini Banerji

CEO, Pratham Education Foundation

Rukmini Banerji has led the design and delivery of some of India's largest education interventions since joining Pratham in 1996. Pratham has a long-standing research collaboration with J-PAL to rigorously evaluate and scale education programs, including an ongoing evaluation of an AI-powered structured pedagogy program. Rukmini's work has spanned building sustained partnerships with governments and strengthening systems for measurement, monitoring, and evaluation. From 2005 to 2014, she served as the Director of ASER Centre, Pratham's autonomous research and assessment unit that conducts the nationwide Annual Status of Education Report. Trained as an economist, she studied at St. Stephen's College and the Delhi School of Economics, was a Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford, and earned her PhD from the University of Chicago.



Brigitte Hoyer Gosselink

Director, AI & Social Impact
Google

Brigitte Hoyer Gosselink works at the intersection of AI, philanthropy, and social impact, leading efforts that apply emerging technologies to address global challenges. At Google, she has led initiatives on AI for social good, sustainability, climate change, crisis response, and education, including flagship programs such as the Google AI Impact Challenge and AI for Global Goals. Over more than a decade, she has managed and enabled over \$500 million in funding to help organizations responsibly deploy technology in the communities they serve, working closely with Google's AI research teams and external partners. Previously, Brigitte worked across the social and public sectors at The Bridgespan Group, the USAID, and International Relief and Development. She holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a Bachelor's from the University of Virginia, and serves on the IDinsight Board of Directors.



Namya Mahajan

Co-founder, Rocket Learning

At Rocket Learning, Namya Mahajan works to strengthen early childhood education in India by embedding foundational learning within public systems, using a combination of AI-enabled tools, behavioral insights, and close collaboration with governments, educators, and parents. Her work focuses on translating insights from research and practice into scalable models that support early cognitive development, particularly for children from underserved communities. Namya has previously worked across research and management consulting. She has served as Managing Director at the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Foundation. She holds an MBA and a Bachelor's from Harvard University.



Marguerite Clarke

Lead Education Specialist, The World Bank

Marguerite Clarke is a World Bank Lead Education Specialist, currently based in New Delhi, India. She leads the Bank's work on learning and skills assessment and has more than 20 years of experience working with countries around the world to strengthen their education systems, including in the areas of 21st century skills and learning competencies, student assessment, high-stakes examinations, vocational education, and second chance education. She is currently the Task Team Leader for the Nai Manzil (New Horizons) program in India, which provides education and market-relevant skills training to minority youth who have dropped out of school. Prior to joining the Bank, Marguerite taught at universities in Australia and the United States and also worked as an elementary and secondary school teacher in Ireland and Japan. She received a national award for teaching from the Irish Department of Education. Marguerite has a PhD in Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation and is a member of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) and former chair of its Task Force on Sustainable Development Goal 4.1.

Evaluating AI for Impact: From Idea to Execution



Shobhini Mukerji

Executive Director, J-PAL South Asia

Shobhini Mukerji leads the J-PAL South Asia regional office, overseeing pan-India operations with over 200 staff and partnerships with more than 30 research and policy partnerships in more than 20 Indian states. She works with policymakers, civil society, and researchers to strengthen evidence use in policymaking and scale effective social programs across India and South Asia, while advising donors on evidence-informed spending to reduce poverty. Her research focuses on education and the intersection of gender and employment. She has co-authored influential randomized evaluations with Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo on foundational literacy interventions that are now being scaled across India and parts of Africa to reach over 60 million children. Shobhini brings deep experience in research, evaluation, and policy engagement.