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Artificial Intelligence & the Future of Evaluation

A practitioner-oriented
orientation for NGO evaluators

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What We Will Cover Today

01	02	03	04	05
The AI Moment	AI in Evaluation	Practical Frameworks	Risks & Ethics	Q&A + Reflection
<i>What is AI and why it matters now</i>	<i>Tools, use-cases & emerging applications</i>	<i>When & how to use AI responsibly</i>	<i>What to watch out for</i>	<i>Open discussion</i>
10 min	15 min	15 min	10 min	10 min



SECTION 01

The AI Moment

What is AI and why does it matter for evaluation practitioners right now?



What Is AI: In Plain Language



Data

AI learns patterns from massive amounts of data: text, numbers, images, surveys.



Models

Algorithms find patterns and make predictions. 'Machine learning' is teaching machines by example.

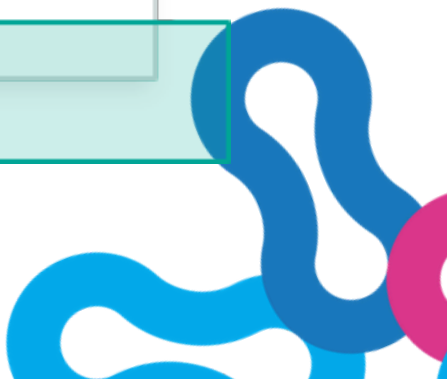


Output

AI produces text, classifications, scores, or predictions: not 'thinking', just pattern matching at scale.



Key insight: AI is a tool for processing information at scale - not a replacement for human judgment in evaluation.



Why This Moment Matters

Speed

AI can process thousands of survey responses, field notes, or documents in minutes.

Cost

Qualitative coding, translation, and analysis now possible at far lower cost.

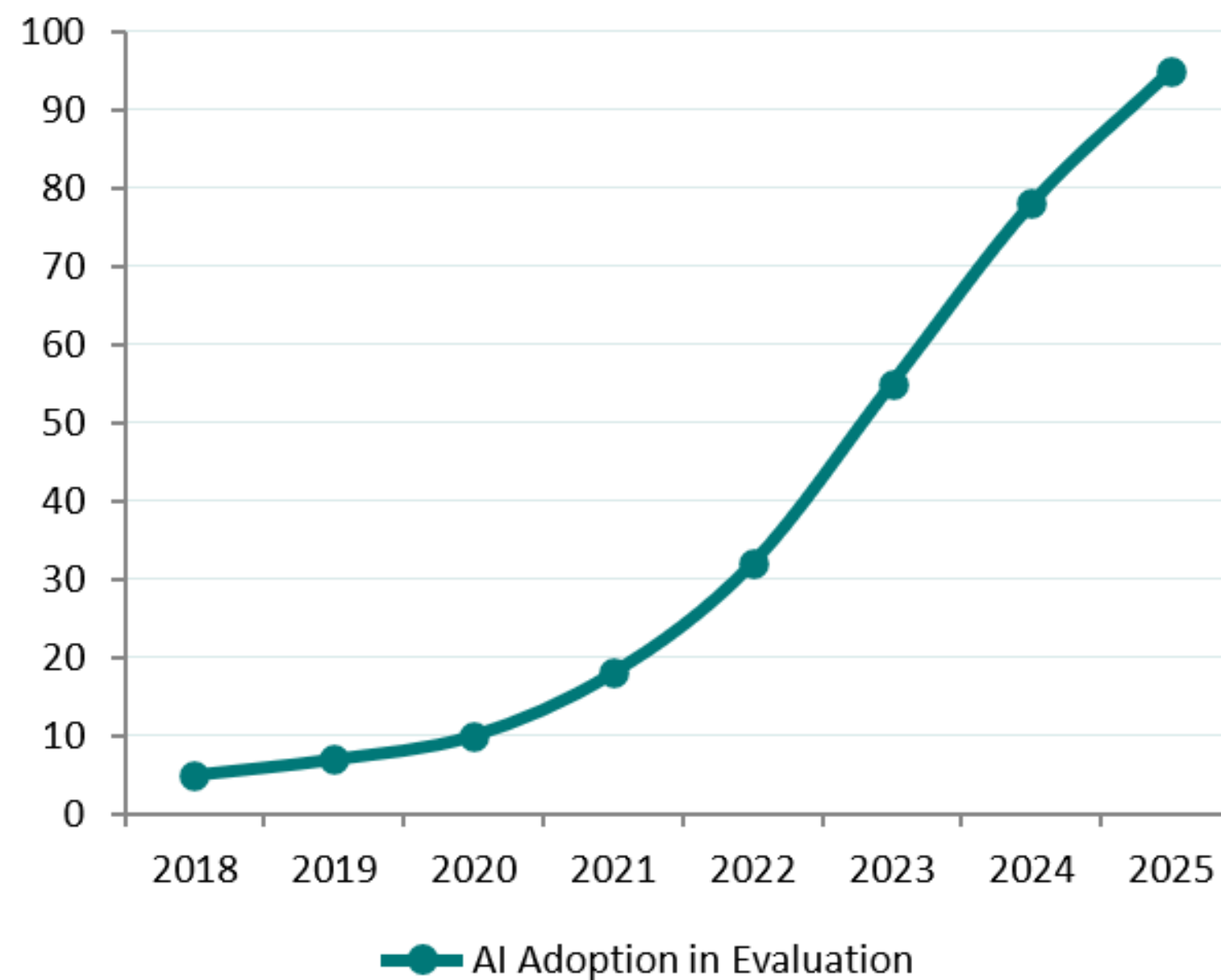
Access

Free/low-cost tools (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) are already in NGO hands.

Risk of exclusion

Donors and think-tanks are adopting AI. NGOs need to engage - not be left behind.

AI adoption index (illustrative)



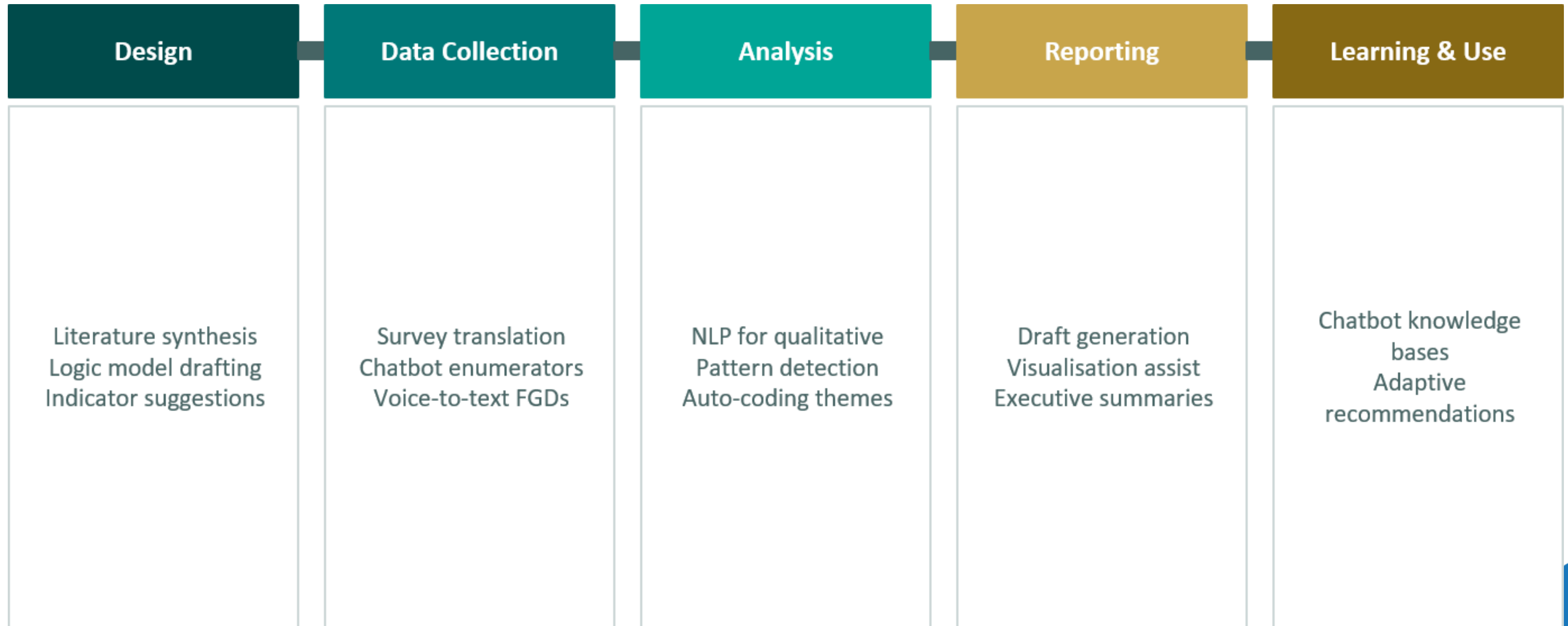
SECTION 02

AI in Evaluation

Where and how AI is being applied across the evaluation lifecycle



AI Across the Evaluation Lifecycle



Tools Available to NGOs - Right Now

ChatGPT / Claude

General AI

Drafting surveys, summarising FGD notes, coding qualitative data

Cost: Free / Low cost

Google NotebookLM

Document AI

Upload evaluation reports - ask questions, generate summaries

Cost: Free

Otter.ai / Whisper

Audio → Text

Transcribe field interviews and focus group discussions

Cost: Free / Freemium

ATLAS.ti / NVivo AI

Qual Analysis

AI-assisted qualitative coding for thematic analysis

Cost: Paid

Power BI Copilot

Data viz

Natural language queries over your M&E data dashboards

Cost: Mid-tier

ODK + AI Integrations

Data collection

Intelligent skip logic, anomaly detection in field data

Cost: Open source



SECTION 03

Practical Frameworks

When to use AI, when NOT to - and how to integrate thoughtfully



When to Use AI - and When Not To

✓ USE AI WHEN...

- ✓ Processing large volumes of text data quickly
- ✓ Generating first drafts for human review
- ✓ Translating content across languages
- ✓ Identifying themes from transcripts
- ✓ Summarising existing evidence literature

✗ AVOID AI WHEN...

- ⚠ Making final attribution or causal claims
- ⚠ Replacing primary stakeholder engagement
- ⚠ Generating data where none exists
- ⚠ Sensitive contexts (trauma, conflict, minors)
- ⚠ Where 'black box' decisions are unacceptable



A Simple 3-Step Integration Approach

1

Audit Your Evaluation Workflow

Map each step. Ask: where is time lost to volume, repetition, or language barriers? That is your AI entry point.

2

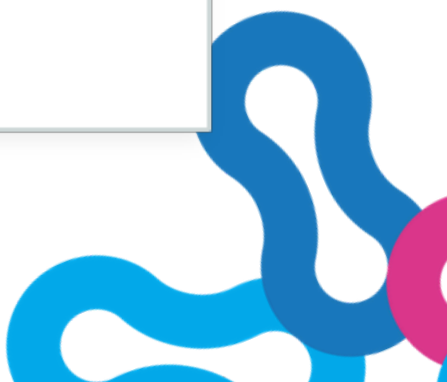
Pilot on Non-Critical Data

Test AI on a past dataset or secondary documents first. Validate against human outputs. Build team confidence.

3

Human-in-the-Loop Always

AI produces a draft. A human decides. Document what AI contributed. Build institutional memory about AI use.



SECTION 04

Risks & Ethics

What every evaluation practitioner must understand before deploying AI



Six Risks NGO Evaluators Must Know

Hallucination

AI confidently generates false information. Always verify AI claims against primary sources.

Bias Amplification

AI trained on biased data reproduces and scales that bias. Check outputs for marginalised group representation.

Data Privacy

Feeding beneficiary data into public AI tools may violate consent and data protection laws.

Black Box Problem

You cannot always explain WHY AI reached a conclusion. This undermines evaluator accountability.

Over-reliance

Teams may stop questioning AI outputs. Critical thinking is the evaluator's core value - AI must not erode it.

Digital Equity

AI tools assume internet access, literacy, and English fluency. Global South contexts need tailored approaches.



Ethical Principles for AI-Assisted Evaluation



Transparency

Disclose when and how AI was used in your evaluation methodology.



Human Oversight

An evaluation professional must review, validate and own all AI outputs.



Do No Harm

Never use AI in ways that could expose, stigmatise or disadvantage communities.



Informed Consent

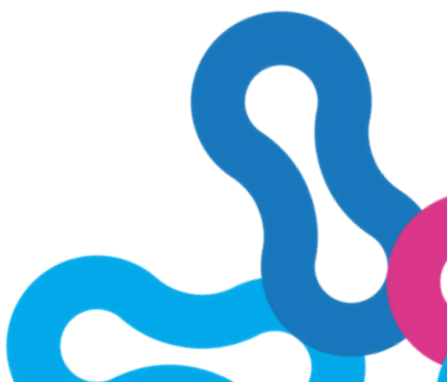
Participants must know if AI tools will process their data or stories.

Core principle: AI must enhance evaluator integrity — never substitute for it.



What to Remember from Today

- 1** AI is a force multiplier, not a replacement - It processes at scale; you provide judgment and context.
- 2** Start small and audit first - Map your evaluation workflow before picking any tool.
- 3** Transparency is non-negotiable - Always disclose AI use in methodology and reporting.
- 4** Risks are real - especially bias and privacy - Build safeguards before you deploy, not after.
- 5** The future is human + AI, not human vs AI - Practitioners who know how to work with AI will lead the next generation of evaluation.



SECTION 05

Questions & Reflection



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- Where in your last evaluation could AI have saved time?
- What data privacy risks exist in your current context?
- How will you explain AI use to your donors and partners?

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evaluation
initiative

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