Hello, my name is Swapneel Mehta, and I am a postdoctoral researcher at MIT and Boston University, as well as the co-founder of SimPPL, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing digital trust for the global majority. My work bridges technology and policy to address critical global challenges, aligning closely with the priorities of the Future Leaders community and the NEXT event.

At SimPPL, we have built a grassroots movement empowering underserved communities through responsible computing and AI tools. Our program trains students from Tier II and III institutions in India to develop and deploy these tools in collaboration with civil society. These efforts have impacted rural communities in India, Bangladesh, and Mongolia, reaching hundreds of users. For example, our students now train fact-checkers in Mongolia, enabling them to accelerate their work tenfold—a project recognized internationally by the Google News Initiative.

Our initiatives also address pressing issues like political targeting and harassment on social media. One of our teams’ investigations led to Meta’s removal of accounts targeting female political leaders in Bangladesh, which had reached 95 million users. Beyond technology, we co-create digital literacy systems tailored to local contexts, such as Sakhi, a WhatsApp-based health literacy intervention impacting over 300 families across India and Bangladesh, with plans to scale to 5,000 families by 2025.

Recognized by Google, Mozilla, MIT, and UNICEF, our work has garnered three international awards in two years and produced over 15 research publications at top workshops. It demonstrates how grassroots innovation can scale globally while fostering inclusivity and sustainability.

The NEXT Milan Forum offers an unparalleled opportunity to share these experiences while learning from other young leaders tackling global challenges like digital transition and human empowerment. I am eager to contribute my expertise in platform governance and digital trust while collaborating with peers to advance sustainable growth and equitable development worldwide. Thank you!