

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026

Empowered Lives, Resilient Futures

6–8 October • ADB Headquarters, Manila



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ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026 · SESSION 13



Beyond this Budget Cycle: Making Social Protection Sustainable

Framing the session: Why sustainable financing strategies are the linchpin for resilient, inclusive social protection systems across Asia and the Pacific.

Framing remarks: Navendu Karan, Director, Public Sector Management and Governance Sector Office, ADB

8 October 2026 · 11:15–12:30 · ADB Headquarters, Manila

An Investment — Not a Cost

Well-designed social protection programs deliver documented fiscal, social and economic returns, yet the region finances far below its needs.

8%

of GDP: Asia-Pacific social protection spend (excl. health) — vs a 12.9% global average

ESCAP 2024 · ILO WSPR 2024–26

2B

people in low- and middle-income countries remain inadequately covered by social protection

World Bank, State of Social Protection Report 2025

+2%

of GDP needed annually to close the region's social protection floor financing gap

ILO / Cattaneo et al. 2024

\$2.50

generated in the local economy for every \$1 transferred to poor households

World Bank 2025

Bottom line: Financing deficits, rather than the lack of evidence on returns, are the binding constraint on closing coverage and adequacy gaps across the region.

Four Domestic Levers for Sustainable Financing

The starting point for any country strategy — tailored to its fiscal, economic and political realities.



Strengthen Domestic Revenue

Expand the tax base, adopt progressive taxation, and curb illicit financial flows.



Improve Expenditure Efficiency

Modernize administration, sharpen beneficiary targeting, digitize transfers, and reduce regressive subsidies.



Deploy Macroeconomic Levers

Where fiscal space allows, adjust debt management, tap reserves, or adopt a more accommodative framework.



Reform Social Insurance & Pensions

Balance adequacy, affordability and sustainability via actuarial discipline and extend coverage to informal workers and the 'missing middle'.

A Catalytic — Not a Substitute — Role



The Fiscal Backdrop Is Difficult

- Developing Asia-Pacific debt-to-GDP (excl. PRC) is at its highest since the late-1990s Asian financial crisis.
- 10 regional economies are in, or at high risk of, debt distress and global public debt passed 94% of GDP in 2025.
- This raises the stakes for prudent domestic reform — and for de-risked, catalytic external support.

Sources: Volz et al. 2025 (ADB WP 1516) · IMF Fiscal Monitor, April 2026



Climate & Disaster Risk Financing

Adaptive, shock-responsive social protection as a channel for climate and disaster risk funds (GCF, Global Shield) — entry points now mapped.



Innovative Capital Market Instruments

Sovereign SDG bonds, social/blue bonds and blended finance to crowd in private capital.



Institutionalized National Frameworks

Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) and Global Accelerator roadmaps embed financing in law and budget cycles.

Where to Take This Next

Practical instruments participants can use to plan, benchmark and institutionalize financing.



ESCAP SPOT Simulator

Model the cost, coverage and poverty impact of social protection floor options, country by country.



ADB Social Protection Indicator

Comparable country data on social protection spending, coverage, benefit size and distributional impact across the region.



Climate Finance Windows

Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and the Global Shield structure for pre-arranged shock response.



INFFs and Roadmaps

Integrated Frameworks and National Accelerator Financing and Global Accelerator roadmaps embed financing in law and budgets.

Country Lessons to Anchor the Panel Discussion

INDONESIA

Innovation frontier

Sovereign SDG bonds, child-responsive social impact bonds, and a landmark fossil-fuel subsidy-to-cash-transfer reform.

SRI LANKA

Crisis to resilience

New National Social Protection Strategy sequences safety nets with fiscal consolidation after the 2022 economic crisis.

FIJI

Inclusive & adaptive

Disability-inclusive spending, gender-responsive budgeting, and an advancing shock-responsive protection framework.



The question is not whether countries can afford to invest in social protection — ***it is whether they can afford not to.***

Panel: Dinar Dana Kharisma (Indonesia) · K. A. P. Damayanthie (Sri Lanka) · Salote Latu Biukoto (Fiji) · Jil Taige (Task Force on Adaptive Social Protection and Climate Finance)