

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026

Empowered Lives, Resilient Futures

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SESSION 6 Weathering Storms and Stresses: Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection

MODERATOR



Bob Babajanian
Senior Social Development Specialist (Social Protection)
Human and Social Development Sector Office
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Babken (Bob) Babajanian is a Senior Social Development Specialist at ADB, specializing in Social Protection. He works on adaptive and shock-responsive social protection, inclusive and resilient social protection systems, and social protection indicators across Asia and the Pacific. Prior to joining ADB, Bob worked full-time at HelpAge International, ODI Global, and the World Bank. He also served as a lecturer at the London School of Economics (LSE) for over 10 years, where he designed and taught postgraduate courses, including *Design and Delivery of Social Protection* and *Evidence-Based Policy Design and Implementation*.

SPEAKERS and PANELISTS



Veremo Muria
Director, Social Protection
Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection
Government of Fiji

Veremo Muria provides strategic and operational leadership for national social assistance and welfare programmes supporting vulnerable individuals, families, older persons and persons with disabilities.

His areas of expertise include social protection policy and program delivery, adaptive and shock-responsive social protection, social assistance reform, disability inclusion, poverty reduction, welfare graduation, digital transformation and strengthening social protection information systems. He has extensive experience in program governance, data-driven service delivery, emergency response and partnership with government agencies, civil society, and development partners.

Veremo holds a master's degree from Western Sydney University and a bachelor's degree from the University of the South Pacific.



Juan Carlo V. Marquez
Assistant Secretary, Policy & Planning
Department of Social Welfare and Development
Government of the Philippines

Juan Carlo V. Marquez currently serves as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning. He also serves as the DSWD Co-spokesperson. He earned his degree Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Santo Tomas and obtained his Master of Public Management from the Korea Development Institute School of Public Policy and Management.

Prior to his current role in the DSWD, he served in the Office of the President - Presidential Management Staff as Assistant Secretary for Presidential Support Services, and the National Youth Commission.



Katinka Weinberger
Chief
Sustainable Socioeconomic Transformation
Section
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

She has more than 25 years of experience across the Asia-Pacific region advancing sustainable development through policy, research, and multistakeholder engagement. Her work focuses on the interlinkages between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development, with particular emphasis on transformative pathways towards greater inclusion, resilience, and sustainability. She leads intergovernmental processes, regional policy initiatives, and strategic partnerships that support sustainable development outcomes across Asia and the Pacific. She holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Kiel, Germany.



Marco Knowles
Team Lead, Social Protection
Food and Agriculture Organization

Marco Knowles leads FAO's Social Protection Team. With almost 30 years of international experience, he has worked in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America. His work focuses on leveraging social protection to make agrifood systems more inclusive of the rural poor. This involves supporting national social protection systems in adapting to the specificities of rural populations as well as making social protection an integral part of climate action. Marco holds a BSc in Economics and Sociology and an MSc in Development Studies. He loves cooking and exploring the Italian countryside to find ingredients for this.



Christina Lowe (Christy)
Social Protection Specialist – Consultant
Asian Development Bank

Christy Lowe is an ADB Consultant, ODI Research Associate, and Social Protection specialist, working on wide-ranging topics within inclusive and adaptive social protection. Her research and policy advisory roles over the last 15 years have included work on Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Africa and Europe, with NGOs, UN agencies and multilateral institutions, including the World Food Programme, the World Bank, and ADB. She has authored over 50 research papers, policy briefs, and knowledge outputs, and is currently working extensively with ADB on a multi-year, multi-country research project on building climate and disaster resilience through social protection.