

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026

Empowered Lives, Resilient Futures

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ADB

SESSION 1

Food for Thought: Leveraging Social Protection to Improve Nutrition and Food Security

MODERATOR



Amir Jilani
Senior Social Sector Specialist
Human and Social Development Sector Office
Sectors Department 3
Asian Development Bank

Amir Jilani specializes in scaling evidence-based and technology-enabled solutions to improve public service delivery, build resilience, and promote human capital development. At ADB, Amir leads social policy dialogue with governments across Asia and the Pacific and supports the design and implementation of loan and technical assistance projects addressing poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and economic vulnerability.

His research and operational experience span nutrition-sensitive social protection, economic inclusion programs, basic education, and digital public infrastructure. Prior to joining ADB, Amir worked at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) as an applied microeconomist on a series of social protection, health, nutrition, and education initiatives across Asia and Africa.

SPEAKERS and PANELIST

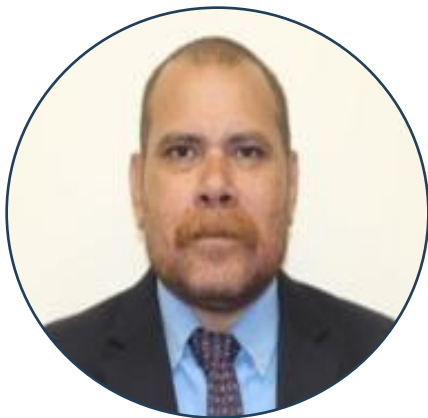


Asim Ijaz
Director General
Nutrition CCT Wing
Government of Pakistan

Asim Ijaz leads the Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) portfolio, including the Nutrition-Sensitive Nashonuma Programme, and oversees the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER). With over 23 years of experience across government, development, and academia, he has been at the forefront of strengthening Pakistan's social protection

systems through data-driven design, recertification of NSER, and institutional reforms. Dr. Ijaz has steered several national initiatives such as the Benazir Nashonuma Programme, Benazir Hunarmand Programme (BHP), Social Protection Wallets, and the Grievance Redressal MIS, ensuring technology-enabled, citizen-centric service delivery.

His leadership has contributed significantly to integrating nutrition objectives into social protection and strengthening linkages with the health system - central themes of this learning exchange. Before BISP, he worked with USAID, CARE International, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Livestock department, etc on programmes advancing community development and human capital outcomes. A veterinarian by training and a PhD scholar, he also teaches at the University of Agriculture, Peshawar. His work focuses on nutrition-sensitive social protection, human capital development, and organizational strengthening, exemplifying Pakistan's commitment to global learning and south-south knowledge exchange.



Jacob Manasec
Director
Social Protection
Government of Papua New Guinea

Jacob Manase is currently serving as Acting Director for Social Protection and Safety Nets at Papua New Guinea's Department for Community Development and Religion (DfCDR). He has over 15 years of experience in public policy, strategic planning, governance, monitoring and evaluation, and institutional development. His work has focused on developing and implementing national policies that promote social protection, disability inclusion, community development, child and family welfare, gender equality, and civil society partnerships. He is committed to strengthening government systems, advancing evidence-based policymaking, and improving services for vulnerable populations across Papua New Guinea.

Throughout his career, he has collaborated with government agencies, development partners, civil society organizations, and provincial administrations to translate policy into practical and sustainable outcomes. He has contributed to advancing Papua New Guinea's social

protection agenda through the development of implementation strategies, governance frameworks, and legislative reforms that foster inclusive growth and social resilience. His work supports the country's long-term development priorities under Vision 2050 and the Medium-Term Development Plan IV by promoting effective, inclusive, and accountable public policy.



Saskia de Pee
Senior Advisor at the Nutrition, School Meals, and Social Protection Service
World Food Programme

Dr. Saskia de Pee is Senior Nutrition Advisor at the Nutrition, School Meals and Social Protection Service at the Headquarters of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). She is also Adjunct Associate Professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Boston. She has worked in public health nutrition for more than 25 years. Her areas of expertise include cost and affordability of diets, food and nutrient security, diet & climate, micronutrients, fortification, nutrition sensitive social protection, and she leads the development of Enhance, a new open access diet analytics platform that she'll speak about today. She has co-authored more than 150 scientific publications and holds a PhD in Human Nutrition from Wageningen University, the Netherlands.



Laura Itzkowitz
Senior Social Development Specialist (Nutrition)
Human and Social Development Sector Office
Sectors Department 3
Asian Development Bank

Laura Itzkowitz works on nutrition within social protection programs across Asia and the Pacific. Prior to joining ADB, Laura designed and led multisectoral projects for USAID and international NGOs, focusing on nutrition, community health, social and behavior change (SBC), and cross-sectoral coordination in more than 20 countries across four continents. From 2017-2025 she was a Senior Nutrition Advisor at USAID in Washington, DC supporting nutrition programs across Asia as well as parts of Africa and the

Middle East. Her prior experience includes working with Alive & Thrive in Southeast Asia, Australian Red Cross in the Pacific Islands, Humanity and Inclusion in Laos, and Nuru International in Kenya. Laura has a Master of Public Health Nutrition from Tufts University and a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.