

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026

Empowered Lives, Resilient Futures

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ADB

SESSION 3 Scaling Economic Inclusion: Pathways out of Poverty through Social Protection Systems

MODERATOR



Palak Rawal
Social Development Specialist
Human and Social Development Sector Office
Sectors Department 3
Asian Development Bank

Palak Rawal supports social protection operations and analytical work across Asia and the Pacific. Her work focuses on strengthening social protection and labor market systems, particularly through economic inclusion programs that promote sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable households, shock-responsive social protection, and policy responses to emerging challenges, including new forms of work and demographic transitions. Prior to joining ADB, she worked with the World Bank on strengthening gender-responsive social protection programs and with the Government of India on improving public service delivery. She holds a Master of Public Policy from the National University of Singapore.

FRAMING SPEAKER



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 PANELISTS



H.T.R.N. Piyasena
Additional Secretary
Ministry of Rural Development, Social Security, and
Community Empowerment
Government of Sri Lanka

H.T.R.N Piyasena is a senior officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS) with over 25 years of experience in public administration and Development Management. She currently serves as the Additional secretary at the Ministry of Rural development, Social Security and Community Empowerment, where she provides strategic leadership in planning, implementing and monitoring development programs that promote social protection and community empowerment. Since joining the Sri Lanka Administrative Service in 2000, she has held several key positions including Assistant Divisional Secretary, Divisional Secretary, Additional District Secretary and Director General of Gramashakthi Bureau. She holds a Master of Arts in Sociology from the University of Kelaniya and Bachelor of Arts from the University of Peradeniya.



M. K. S. Radha Nanayakkara
Additional Secretary (Administration)
Ministry of Rural Development, Social Security,
and Community Empowerment
Government of Sri Lanka

M. K. S. Radha Nanayakkara is a Special grade officer of the Sri Lanka Administration service (SLAS) with over 22 years of experience in Public Administration and Development Management. She currently serves as the Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Rural Development, Social Security and Community Empowerment. Where she provides strategic administration, implementing and monitoring development programmes that promote Social Protection and Community Empowerment. Since joining the Sri Lanka Administrative Service in 2003, she has held several key positions, including Assistant Divisional Secretary, Biyagama, and worked as additional director in the Department of Social Service. She holds a Master in Sociology from the University of Kelaniya and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Kelaniya.



Dinar Dana Kharisma
Director of Social and Economic Independence
Ministry of National Development Planning
Government of Indonesia

Since 2008, Dinar Dana Kharisma has helped design national social protection programs, including the conditional cash transfer Program Keluarga Harapan, the Integrated Social Service and Referral System (SLRT), and the National Social Security System (SJSN). He is currently developing the Affirmative Empowerment Card to expand equal economic opportunity for the poor and vulnerable. He is also formulating the Grand Design of Community Empowerment to integrate Indonesia's various social and economic empowerment programs, to further enhance economic independence, social agency, and community resilience in the face of risks and transitions. His previous policy products include Desa Cemara, a capacity-building model for local and village governments to support a more affirmative planning process, and the award-winning Integrated Older People Care in five cities in Indonesia. As an academic, Dinar is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Padjadjaran, focusing on social policy analysis. He

received his BA in Economics from the University of Indonesia, MA in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University, USA, and MA and PhD in Social Policy from Brandeis University, USA.



Dean Karlan
Frederic Esser Nemmers Distinguished Professor of Economics and Finance, Northwestern University
Co-director of the Global Poverty Research Lab at the Kellogg School of Management

Dean Karlan is a Professor of Economics and Finance at Northwestern University. He is a development and behavioral economist, former Chief Economist of USAID, founder of Innovations for Poverty Action (a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty), co-director of the Global Poverty Research Lab, and a former member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the M.I.T. Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Previously, he was on faculty at Yale University (2005-2017) and Princeton University (2002-2005). He studied at M.I.T. (PhD in Economics), the University of Chicago (MBA and MPP) and University of Virginia (BA).



Shameran Abed
Executive Director
BRAC International

Shameran Abed oversees all of BRAC's programmatic work outside Bangladesh. He joined BRAC in 2009 and has been instrumental in bringing its flagship programs of microfinance and ultra-poor graduation to global scale. Under his leadership, BRAC's microfinance portfolio saw impressive growth and a renewed focus on client impact. Since 2016, Shameran also led BRAC's ultra-poor graduation work and played an instrumental role in setting up the Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative at BRAC International to spearhead global advocacy and support the scaling of Graduation through partnering with governments. In 2021, Shameran took over as Executive Director of BRAC International, which manages BRAC's rapidly scaling programmes in 14 countries in Asia and Africa.

Shameran has significant experience on non-profit and corporate boards. Currently, he chairs the board of bKash, BRAC Bank's mobile financial services subsidiary and one of the world's largest mobile money providers, as well as several other boards.

Shameran went to Hamilton College in the United States and is a qualified Barrister in the UK.