

ASIA-PACIFIC SOCIAL PROTECTION WEEK 2026

Empowered Lives, Resilient Futures

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SESSION 7

More than A Meal: School Feeding to Nourish Resilient Futures

MODERATOR



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

Laura Itzkowitz is a Senior Social Development Specialist (Nutrition) at ADB working 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.

SPEAKERS and PANELIST



E. Bunthen
Director, Department of Policy
Government of Cambodia

Bunthen leads / facilitates / coordinates policy development and reforms to strengthen social protection in Cambodia. Previously, he served as Deputy Director of the Payment Certification Department at the National Payment Certification Agency (NPCA), where he played a key role in improving healthcare financing and payment systems.

He is a medical doctor by background and holds a Master's degree in Public Health as well as a PhD in Medical Sciences from Hiroshima University.



Mirbek Rakhmatildeev
School Meals Coalition Coordinator
and Lead Specialist
Ministry of Education
Government of Kyrgyz Republic

Mirbek Rakhmatildeev oversees policies and programs related to school nutrition and general education, with over 15 years of experience in teaching, school leadership, and education policy. He holds a Master's degree in Global Education Leadership from Korea National University of Education. He also participated in international programs, including the U.S. State Department's IVLP on "Education in the Digital Age."



Elisabet Fadul
Head of Programme – Philippines
World Food Programme

Elisabet Fadul leads the collaboration with the Government and key partners to strengthen integrated food systems and social protection systems, with a strong focus on reaching last-mile communities. In this role, she guides program and policy design, fosters strategic partnerships, and ensures evidence-based enhancements that advance food security and nutrition outcomes. Having joined WFP in 2005, she has accumulated 20 years of experience across programme, supply chain, research, and monitoring units in both humanitarian and development contexts, and took up her current post in the Philippines in 2025. Beyond WFP, she has worked with other UN organizations and contributed to global advocacy platforms, including the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Councils. A national of the Dominican Republic, Elisabet holds a Master's degree in business administration and a Bachelor's degree in international relations.



Richard Morgan
Director of Social Protection Programs
Nutrition International

Richard Morgan is an economist who has worked on issues of human wellbeing, child rights and development, including nutrition, for a total of 48 years. These include two decades of working experience in Eastern and Southern Africa with particular focus on social protection, food security, rural development, humanitarian response, livelihoods and child welfare. Richard is a former global Director of Policy and Deputy Director for Programmes at UNICEF; former Director of Advocacy at Plan International and the founder of Save the Children's Child Poverty portfolio, including its "cash for nutrition" programs.

Richard now leads Nutrition International's work on evidence-based strategies for the integration of nutrition with Social Protection policies and programs, with particular focus on countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Lesotho, Bangladesh and Timor-Leste. He has led NI's technical support to the African Development Bank in integrating nutrition in its project operations through the Banking on Nutrition partnership and has co-published lessons on social protection for nutrition with the Asian Development Bank. Richard also convenes an informal alliance of individuals working in the field of Nutrition for Social Protection.



Tomoko Kato
Senior Food and Nutrition Specialist
Agriculture, Food, Nature, and Rural Development
Sector Office (AFNR)
Asian Development Bank

Ms. Tomoko Kato has over a decade of experience mainstreaming nutrition into agriculture and rural development investments across Asia and the Pacific. Her work focuses on integrating nutrition into policies, programs, and financing mechanisms, ensuring that food systems deliver not only productivity but also healthier diets and improved well-being.

She is a passionate advocate for social inclusion and education for all, believing that community-driven development is key to creating lasting impact. She

champions approaches that place vulnerable groups—mothers, youth, and Indigenous communities—at the center of food systems transformation, empowering them as agents of change for healthier diets and resilient communities.