

Forum on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Health Equity

A Collaboration between the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO)

25-26 March 2026

ADB Headquarters, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

Background:

Over the past decade, artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly evolved in complexity, performance, and utility. Its integration across a wide range of industrial sectors has accelerated, with healthcare emerging as one of the most transformative sectors. In this sector, AI has enabled high-impact applications - from enhancing the speed and accuracy of disease diagnosis and supporting clinical decision-making, to strengthening public health initiatives such as disease surveillance and workforce optimization. Moreover, AI holds immense potential to empower individuals, enabling them to take greater control of their personal health and well-being. Yet the central question remains: *who benefits, who is at risk, and do these innovations close or widen health inequities?*

While the potential of AI-enabled applications is substantial, many countries have approached their adoption with caution. This hesitancy stems from concerns about risks and benefits, including model bias, data breaches, privacy violations, and the erosion of professional skills due to over-reliance on AI. Additional barriers include inadequate data infrastructure and a lack of robust evidence on the most effective forms and interfaces of AI to enhance service delivery and system performance. Moreover, the rapid rise of Generative AI has introduced a heightened urgency for the development of comprehensive governance and ethical frameworks.

As a leading development focused financial institution, the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) Strategy 2030 and Digital Technology for Development Directional Guide provide the overarching framework for digital transformation across all sectors. Under this framework, health is prioritized under Operational Priority 1 (Addressing Poverty), with a strong emphasis on identifying and deploying digital technologies to expand universal health coverage, strengthening national health information systems, and enhancing interoperability between health platforms and foundational digital public infrastructure such as digital ID systems and social registries in the ADB developing member countries (DMCs).

The WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO), through its "Weaving Health for All" vision, positions technology and innovation as a central pillar for advancing future health equity. This vision fosters collaboration between WPRO and WHO Member States to shape population health across the region. At the heart of this approach lies a single guiding principle: equity. During the 76th session of the Regional Committee Meeting of the Western Pacific in October 2025, WHO and Member States reaffirmed their shared commitment to leveraging innovation for health equity and harnessing AI to transform health systems. Three strategic priorities were

highlighted: identify and prioritize high-impact cases of AI use for health equity, especially where AI can extend reach or leapfrog constraints, strengthen public sector capacity for responsible AI adoption, including workforce, coordination, and procurement functions, and strengthen ecosystem for governance, ethical oversight, regulatory readiness, and evaluation to accelerate responsible adoption and implementation.

To raise awareness, build trust, and catalyze the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in health systems across the region, ADB's Human and Social Development Sector Office and Digital Sector Office, in collaboration with WPRO, convenes researchers, policymakers, healthcare innovators, technologists, and investors to explore developments in AI applications, governance frameworks, capacity building, and the political economy of AI in health. A central focus will be ensuring that AI solutions are tailored to local contexts and equitably benefit those most in need.

Objectives and outputs:

The two-day meeting aims to achieve the following actionable goals:

1. Identify high-impact, evidence-based health AI use cases suitable for resource-constrained settings and map out a pipeline for potential support;
2. Introduce and validate the WHO/WPRO policy guidance on minimum necessary ecosystem for countries and institutions to self-assess readiness for AI adoption;
3. Obtain initial commitment from participating stakeholders to join a pilot regional initiative focused on data/model sharing for a priority health challenge;
4. Endorse a prioritized set of actionable policy recommendations focusing on governance, regulation, and sustainable financing necessary to scale high-impact health AI use cases in resource-constrained settings.

Target participants

The meeting will convene participants from 16 ADB DMCs: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam. Each DMC is invited to nominate two officials: one Director General (Ministry of Health) for national-level AI health governance and planning, and one Director for institutional-level AI implementation and governance.

In addition, health system leaders and practitioners, private sector technologists, academic experts, representatives from civil society organizations, development partners, and philanthropic institutions engaged in AI for Health from Australia, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the Republic of Korea will also be invited.

Forum on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Health Equity

25 - 26 March 2026

ADB Headquarters, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

	Day 1 – 25 March	Day 2 – 26 March
AM	Opening	
	Session 1. AI Use Cases for the Care Continuum: Improving Access and Quality	Session 5. The Political Economy of AI in Health: Understanding Stakeholder Interests and their Impact on Equity
	Session 2. Adopting a risk-based approach for AI use case prioritization	Session 6. AI and Health Financing: Supporting Fair Coverage and Protection
PM	Session 3. Establishing the Minimum Ecosystem for Implementation Risk Management	Session 7. AI Regulation and Oversight: Pathways for Different Realities
	Session 4. Future-Ready Health Workforce: Building Competency for Human-AI Collaboration	Session 8. The Way Forward – Building Alliances and Regional Partnerships

PROGRAM

Day 1, Wednesday, 25 March 2026

08:00 - 08:30	Registration	
08:30 - 09:00	Welcome	
Masters of Ceremonies: Jae Kyoung Kim (ADB), Mengji Chen (WHO)		
5mins	Opening Remarks	Ayako Inagaki Senior Director Human and Social Development Sector Office Sectors Department 3, ADB
5mins	Opening Remarks	Kidong Park Director of Programme Management, WHO WPRO
10mins	Keynote	TBC
09:00 - 10:30	Session 1. AI Use Cases for the Care Continuum: Improving Access and Quality	
Moderators: Jae Kyoung Kim (ADB), Dilip Hensman (WHO)		
This session is a deep dive into use cases, ranging from disease prevention, triage, diagnostics, treatment and follow-up. Further, this session invites participants to identify the high-impact low-risk use cases.		
10 mins	Scene-setting Presentation	Dilip Hensman Coordinator, Health Information and Intelligence WHO WPRO

40 mins	Speaker Presentation (5 speakers, 8 mins each)	<p>Tiantian Li Founder, DXY.cn</p> <p>Fariza Ngah Deputy Director General Ministry of Health, Malaysia</p> <p>Natarajan Rajaraman Director, EquiTech Collective</p> <p>Hongsoo Kim Professor, Seoul National University</p> <p>Chris Paton Associate Professor, University of Auckland</p>
20 mins	Panel Discussion	TBC
20 mins	Plenary Discussion	Dilip Hensman/Jae Kyouon Kim
10:30 - 11:00	Networking Break	
11:00 - 12:30	Session 2. Adopting a Risk-based Approach for AI Use Case Prioritization	
Moderators: Carolyn Florey (ADB), Mengji Chen (WHO)		
How to prioritize the use case of AI?		
10mins	AI Ecosystem in Primary Healthcare	<p>Kunhee Park Director General Pyeongchang County Health and Medical Center Republic of Korea</p>
10mins	Digital Public Infrastructure for AI	<p>Carolyn Florey Digital Development Specialist, ADB</p>
25mins	Warm-up: Ecosystem Reality Test	<p>Mengji Chen Technical Lead, Research, Ethics and Innovation</p>

	The Minimum Viable Ecosystem for Safe AI Adoption	WHO WPRO
20mins	Build your AI Deployment – Group Exercise	Mengji Chen
15mins	Cross-group Challenge & Expert Review	All participants
10mins	Group Report Back	Group volunteers
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 15:00	Session 3. Establishing the Minimum Ecosystem for Implementation Risk Management	
Moderators: Jae Kyoung Kim (ADB), Mengji Chen (WHO)		
<p>What does a country, health system, or healthcare facility need at minimum to mitigate the implementation risk inherent to AI? This session introduces WHO's policy tool on the essential technical, legal, and operational "floor" required for safe AI adoption, moving beyond aspirational benchmarks toward realistic entry points for low and middle-income countries (LMICs). Participants are invited to stress-test the draft framework against their national contexts to identify critical resource gaps in building the minimum viable ecosystem for AI adoption. ADB DMCs and WHO Member States and experts will also validate the requirements, ensuring the final draft serves as a robust tool for national decision-making and safe scaling of AI solutions.</p>		
10mins	Recap of Morning Highlights	Jae Kyoung Kim Health Specialist, ADB
25mins	Case Study Round 1: What Went Wrong?	All participants
35mins	Case Study Round 2: Design the Minimum Viable Ecosystem	All participants
20mins	Insights Synthesis and Country Takeaways	All participants
15:00 – 15:30	Networking break	

15:30 – 17:00	Session 4. Future-Ready Health Workforce: Building Competency for Human-AI Collaboration	
Moderators: Yesle Kim (ADB), Sunju Lee (WHO)		
Soon, AI will evolve into a core health system capacity rather than a luxury. This session will define essential competencies and regional training opportunities for clinicians, administrators, and policymakers. Participants will be invited to share their practices and initiatives. Further, the session aims to move from shared understanding to individual action and then to collaborative strategy		
15mins	Scene-setting presentation	Yangmu Huang Associate Professor, School of Public Health Peking University
10mins	Health Professionals' Competencies in AI Era and Future Medical Education and Lifelong Learning	Iris Thiele Isip Tan Professor, College of Medicine Chief, Medical Informatics Unit University of the Philippines Manila
10mins	Closing the AI training Gap through Collaboration: AVPN's efforts (TBD)	Young Park Director, Special Projects, AVPN
10mins	Lessons from LMICs for Human-AI Collaboration	Chris Paton Associate Professor, University of Auckland
10mins	DepEd AI program – AI in basic education	Dexter Galban Assistant Secretary for Strategic Management Department of Education Government of the Philippines
10mins	AI capacity building for health workforce in Korea	Junghwan Park Director, Division of Health Data Development Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea
35 mins	Panel discussion and Q&A	TBC

Day 2		
08:30 – 10:00	Session 5. The Political Economy of AI in Health: Understanding Stakeholder Interests and their Impact on Equity	
Moderators: Eduardo Banzon (ADB), Lluís Vinyals Torres (WHO)		
AI has many players or stakeholders, Many with different interests and power. Ensuring that AI works for the intended goals requires understanding them and setting up policies and incentives to navigate them. This panel discussion aims to bring different stakeholders (developers, providers, payers, regulators, hospitals and users, etc.) and show the different interests and purposes, the implications on social and health equity when values do not align, as well as approaches in handling the challenges.		
15mins	Scene-setting Presentation: What are the Key Considerations from Different Stakeholders	Annie Chu Coordinator, Health Policy and Service Design Division WHO WPRO
10mins	Country Experience One	Zhiwen Miao Acting Director Center for Health Statistics and Information National Health Commission People's Republic of China
10mins	Country Experience Two	TBC
20mins	Expert Commentary to Country Experience	Clive Tan Assistant Professor, Senior Consultant, Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Director, Home Team Medical Services, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore Chikako Masuda Head of Intelligence Research, Digital Agency, Japan
25mins	Plenary Discussion	TBC
10:00 – 10:30	Networking Break	

10:30 - 12:00	Session 6. AI and Health Financing: Supporting Fair Coverage and Protection	
Moderators: Akihito Watabe (ADB), Annie Chu (WHO)		
<p>As countries across Asia and the Pacific strive to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into health financing systems offers transformative opportunities to enhance efficiency, equity, and sustainability. This session will explore how AI-powered solutions—such as advanced analytics, machine learning, and digital platforms—are being leveraged to address persistent challenges in health financing, including fraud detection, claims management, and service performance optimization. Drawing on insights from the ADB's regional technical assistance, participants will examine pioneering case studies from [Indonesia, Philippines, India, Thailand, Pakistan...etc.], and the Republic of Korea, where big data and AI have significantly improved fraud prevention and operational efficiency in national health insurance schemes. The discussion will highlight the critical role of data integration, predictive modeling, and digital innovation in strengthening financial risk protection and accelerating progress toward UHC, while emphasizing the need for robust governance, interoperability, and local adaptation to ensure that AI-driven health financing systems are both effective and inclusive.</p>		
5 mins	Scene-setting presentation: AI and Health Financing	Akihito Watabe Health Specialist, ADB
20 mins	Country experience: Indonesia	Setiaji Setiaji Director of Information Technology BPJS Kesehatan Indonesia
10 mins	Country experience: Uzbekistan	Mircea Buga Chief Specialist Department of Budget Formation and Execution State Health Insurance Fund Uzbekistan
30 mins	Panel discussion (Country Perspective)	Francis Uy Chief Architect, Founder and CEO, Sinag Solutions Zhang Yuanzhi

		<p>Director of the Data Service Division, Big Data Center National Healthcare Security Administration People's Republic of China</p> <p>Saurav Bhattarai Team Lead, openIMIS Initiative GIZ Global Alliances for Social Protection</p>
20 mins	Plenary discussion/Q&A	<p>Annie Chu Coordinator, Health Policy and Service Design Division WHO WPRO</p>
5 mins	Conclusion and next steps	<p>Akihito Watabe Health Specialist, ADB</p>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 15:00	Session 7. AI Regulation and Oversight: Pathways for Different Realities	
Moderators: Jae Kyouon Kim (ADB), Mengji Chen (WHO)		
<p>The traditional approach to regulation, which demands comprehensive national frameworks before any technological deployment, can stifle the use of AI in health, especially in resource-constrained settings. This session challenges paradigms. This session will explore how countries can adopt lean regulatory mechanisms (e.g. reliance, sandbox) and accelerate the adoption of AI in health.</p>		
10mins	Scene-setting presentation	<p>Mengji Chen Technical Lead, Research, Ethics and Innovation WHO WPRO</p>
10mins	AI regulation in Singapore	<p>John C W Lim Executive Director Centre of Regulatory Excellence (CoRE) Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore</p>
10mins	Data governance and regulation	<p>Kirsten Mathieson Deputy Director and Policy Lead Transform Health</p>

10mins	Global AI in Health Regulatory Network	Peiling Yap Chief Scientist HealthAI – The Global Agency for Responsible AI
10mins	Lessons learned from designing AI into National Digital Health Strategy	Karthik Adapa Regional Advisor for Digital Health and AI WHO South-East Asia Region
30mins	Panel discussion and Q&A	TBC
15:00 – 15:30	Networking Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Session 8. The Way Forward – Building Alliances and Regional Partnerships	
Moderators: Akihito Watabe (ADB), Dilip Hensman (WHO)		
<p>Most AI models are trained on data from high-resource settings, often resulting in models that fail in the low-resource contexts where the need is greatest. This session argues that open-source licensing, federated learning, and regional data collaboration are the essential enablers for building AI that is equitable, locally relevant, and affordable. This closing session invites health systems leaders and practitioners to share practical mechanisms for cross-border collaboration, the successful practice of adapting open-source models to local applications, and to suggest high-impact regional initiatives that can greatly improve access to AI in resource-constrained settings.</p>		
5mins	Setting the Scene	Dilip Hensman Coordinator, Health Information and Intelligence WHO WPRO
8mins	ASEAN Partnerships	Albert Domingo Undersecretary, Department of Health Government of the Philippines
8mins	Regional Partnerships	Sankalp Khanna Research Team Leader, Health Intelligence The Australian e-Health Research Centre, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

8mins	HealthAI Community of Practice	Jhon Magkilat Knowledge and Training Advisor HealthAI – The Global Agency for Responsible AI
8mins	Regional Partnerships and Data Sharing Framework - Global RETFound Consortium	Paul Nderitu Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (TBC - video recording)
8mins	Regional Collaboration for the Adoption of AI in Health	Alvin Marcelo Director Asia eHealth Information Network (AeHIN)
8mins	Regional Cooperation for a Digital Health Highway	Jennifer Nelson Senior Digital Health Specialist Inter-American Development Bank
8mins	TBC	Hoon Sang Lee Director of Strategic Planning, RIGHT Foundation
32 mins	Panel discussion	
16:50 - 17:00	Closing remarks	Eduardo Banzon Director, Human and Social Development Sector Office ADB Hiromasa Okayasu Director, Division of Data, Strategy and Innovation WHO WPRO