

CONCEPT NOTE FOR SECURE WEBINAR 27
INVESTING IN MENTAL HEALTH



26 February 2026 (2:00-3:30 pm Manila Time)

The [SECURE Webinar Series](#) is a platform to promote innovation and best practices to strengthen health security in Southeast Asian developing member countries (DMCs) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The webinar series is supported by the ADB technical assistance (TA 6767) on Supporting Enhanced COVID-19 Vaccination and Post COVID-19 Health Security Responses in Southeast Asia, and serves as a venue for knowledge exchange among governments, the private sector, development partners, civil society networks and other stakeholders.

SECURE Webinar 27 is part of a regional technical assistance on [Strengthening Integrated Primary Health Care Management of Noncommunicable Diseases \(TA10106\)](#)

Introduction

Health security and mental health are deeply interconnected, as public health emergencies and large-scale threats often trigger widespread psychological distress and strain health systems. Global health threats, such as pandemics or outbreaks, act as significant stressors that increase the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. Modern health security is increasingly viewing mental health not just as a medical issue, but as a critical component of national and global stability, essential for economic productivity and social order.

Mental health continues to be a global health challenge. It remains the leading cause of disability worldwide, accounting for an estimated [1 in every 6 years lived with disability](#). In 2019, studies revealed that about [1 in every 8 individuals](#), approximately 970 million lives, were affected by at least one type of mental disorder, with depression and anxiety alone accounting for 580 million cases. The relationship between mental health and mortality is complex, shaped by co-morbidity such as cardiovascular disease, infectious illnesses, drug overdose, and suicide. Research has shown that individuals diagnosed with severe mental illness face up to a [fivefold increased risk](#) of developing cardiovascular disease compared to the general population. These health disparities contribute to a significant reduction in life expectancy, with [individuals suffering from mental illness dying 15 to 20 years earlier](#) on an average. Mental health-related [suicides](#) further underscore the critical nature of the issue, claiming more than 720,000 lives every year, and ranking as the third leading cause of death among young adolescents.

Mental health conditions caused a global economic loss of [\\$2.5 trillion in 2010, expected to increase to \\$6 trillion by 2030](#). Of this, \$1 trillion was attributed to loss of human resources and productivity due to inadequate mental health care. Beyond the financial burden, the impacts of poor mental health perpetuate poverty, impedes human capital development and strain social welfare systems. [Evidence](#) suggests that every \$1 USD invested in basic mental health care yields a return in investment of \$4 USD through improved health and productivity. The burden of mental conditions is more pronounced in low-income countries, particularly in Asia and the Pacific. It is home to nearly half of the global population affected by mental disorders contributes [1 in every 4 years lived with disability \(YLDs\)](#) and alarmingly, accounts for [61% of global suicide cases](#).

Session objectives

The objectives of the session are as follows:

1. Discuss the mental health context in Asia and the Pacific, and the global experience to reflect on priorities for investing in mental health in the region.
2. Strengthen mental health and health security through policy, governance, and innovative service delivery
3. Showcase the financial opportunity and technical assistance to strengthen mental health services

Session Outcomes

1. Increased recognition of mental health as a development priority among policymakers and developing member countries in Asia and the Pacific
2. Exploration of financing mechanisms for mental health in the region,
3. Strengthen cross-sectoral commitment and collaboration to support the integration of mental health into the national agenda.

Target Audience

The intended audience for this session includes: Health-related government agencies; Local and International development partners; City and local authorities; Advocacy organization/individuals (academic/research institutions); and Private sector

Session Flow

Schedule	Presenter	Themes and Questions
Context setting and presentations		
2:00-2:05 PM 5 minutes	Opening Remarks Vasontara S. Yiengprugsawan, Senior Universal Health Coverage Specialist, ADB	
Presentation		
2:05-2:15 PM 10 minutes	Economic and investment case of mental health Rachana Parikh, Mental Health Specialist, PATH	
2:15-2:30 pm 15 minutes	Youth Mental Health and Sexual/Reproductive Health Sylvia Wong, Technical Advisor, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific	
2:30-2:45 pm 15 minutes	Experiences from Thai Mental Health Program Dutsadee Juengsiragulwit Director of Bureau of Mental Health Service Administration, Thailand	
Panel discussion:		
2:45-3:10 PM 25 minutes	Success and challenges of mental health interventions Government perspective Burin Sura-aroonsamrit, Director of the Bureau of Mental Health Academics	
	Reflections from academia Professor Santosh Jatrana, Deakin University, Australia	
	Insights from advocate and civil society Yves Miel Zuniga, Mental health in the Philippines	
3:10-3:25 PM 10 minutes	Q & A and Reflections	
3:25-3:30 PM 5 minutes	Closing: Eduardo Banzon, Director, Human and Social Development, Sectors Department, ADB	

