

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

## SECURE WEBINAR 27 SPEAKERS

**Dr. Eduardo P. Banzon** is ADB Director, Health Practice Team, Human and Social Development Sectors Office, Sectors Group who champions Universal Health Coverage and has long provided technical support to countries in Asia and the Pacific in their pursuit of this goal. Before joining ADB in 2014, he was President and CEO of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, World Health Organization (WHO) regional adviser for health financing for the Eastern Mediterranean region and WHO health economist in Bangladesh, and World Bank senior health specialist for the East Asia and Pacific region. He was also a faculty member of the University of the Philippines' College of Medicine and Ateneo Graduate School of Business and was an honorary visiting associate professor at the National University of Singapore Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. He completed BS Biology and Doctor of Medicine degrees from the University of the Philippines, and MSc in Health Policy, Planning, and Financing from the London School of Economics and Political Science and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.



**Dr. Vasoontara Sbirakos Yiengprugsawan** is a Senior Universal Health Coverage Specialist (Service Delivery) within the ADB Health Practice Team, Human and Social Development Office, Sectors Group. Her current focus is on health systems strengthening especially primary health care and management of chronic non-communicable diseases and mental health. Prior to ADB, she held various senior health research positions in Australia, a World Health Organization's Fellowship with the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, and in policy with a UN Migration Agency in Geneva. Dr Yiengprugsawan was awarded a PhD in Epidemiology, Economics and Population Health from the Australian National University and MA in International Development from Syracuse University USA.



**Dr. Rachana Parikh** works as a mental health specialist in PATH's India country program. She is also a consultant with the World Bank. Her work primarily focuses on developing scalable mental health interventions for low-resource settings for young people, including technology-driven interventions and promoting integration of mental health in the public health and primary health care programs in India, in partnership with national and state governments. She is a medical doctor with a PhD in adolescent mental health and experience of working with national and state governments on health systems strengthening. At PATH, she has provided technical support and leadership to developing comprehensive and multi-country landscaping and reviews on mental health-related policies and programs, especially focusing on technology for mental health and NCDs in primary health care, common mental disorders, youth mental health, the Covid-19 pandemic, and mental health. Presently, she is supporting the development of demonstration models for integrating mental health within primary health care.



**Sylvia Wong** is Technical Advisor on Adolescents and Youth for UNFPA's Asia Pacific Regional Office. In this role, she provides strategic leadership, policy and programmatic guidance to country teams and partners, focusing on expanding young people's access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and services, life skills, and youth leadership opportunities. She previously served as UNFPA Innovation Lead, managing the organization's global Innovation Fund and spearheading partnerships and initiatives for women and girls' health and well-being. She has deep and extensive experience supporting country teams in implementing adolescent and youth development priorities



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**Dr. Dutsadee Juengsiragulwit** is the Director of Yuwaprasart Waitayopatham Child Psychiatric Hospital, Department of Mental Health in Thailand. Since 2014, she has been appointed as a Director of the Institute of Child and Adolescent Mental Health in the Northeast, North, and Central of Thailand. In 2022-2025, she served as a Director of the Bureau of Mental Health Service Administration, a unit responsible for designing, administering, and evaluating the mental health service system in Thailand before being appointed to her current workplace.



**Dr. Burin Suraaroonsamrit** is a senior academic consultant in the Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health. He first start his career as a clinician with a question of how to strengthen the psychosocial service into community system. Therefore, his main passion is a community mental health as well as the crisis mental health system for the vulnerable group. He has participated in scaling up the crisis mental health service known as the MCATT team (mental health assessment and treatment team) to work collaboratively with community network in crisis and disaster from response to recovery. Later his work focused more on the solution on mental health care after covid-19 crisis. Currently, he is a director of Bureau of Mental Health Academic Affairs.



**Yves Miel Hugo Zuñiga** is a Policy and Advocacy Advisor on health systems at United for Global Mental Health, working at the intersection of mental health and health systems strengthening. With nearly a decade of experience in policy and advocacy, he advances integration of mental health into HIV, TB, and NCD programmes, especially for young people. He led the three-year Elton John AIDS Foundation grant which supported different communities in over 30 countries. Yves also chairs the board of #MentalHealthPH, a youth-led organisation he co-founded in the Philippines. An MBA candidate at the University of Western Australia, he is an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity and works to strengthen financing, evidence, and lived-experience-led advocacy in global mental health.



**Professor Santosh Jatrana** is a Professor of Demography at the Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. She is a quantitative demographer and social epidemiologist with a PhD in Demography from the Australian National University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health from the University of Otago, New Zealand. Previously, she held the position of Research Head at James Cook University's Murtupuni Research Centre for Rural and Remote Health in Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia. Professor Jatrana currently holds an Honorary Associate Professorship at the School of Demography, The Australian National University, and a conjoint appointment at James Cook University. She has extensive work experience in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and India.