



11th ADB International Education and Skills Forum

Applying a Fresh Lens to Unlock the Power of Human Capital

3-5 December 2025 | Metro Manila, Philippines

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Learning across sectors: Preparing people for the jobs of tomorrow

On a busy morning in Yichang City in China, a team of highly qualified nurses, physiotherapists, and counsellors gather around a shared digital dashboard in one of the city's elderly support centres. Together, they analyse patient notes, test results, and care routines to prioritise treatment for those most in need.

In the city of four million residents, where nearly a quarter are over the age of 60, Yichang's integrated approach to quality healthcare is providing its ageing residents with peace of mind. For its nurses and caregivers, the updated training programs, which combine digital skills with hands-on training, are helping them build flexible career paths.

In today's world, the workplace is rapidly changing, and the boundaries between sectors are fading. Driven by the 'triple transition' of demographic ageing, climate change, and technology, this shift is reshaping economies and skills across the region. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is helping countries prepare for the future by strengthening their education and training systems to create agile workforces with cross-sector skills. Its 2024 report, [Quality Jobs and the Future of Work in Asia and the Pacific](#), highlights that as traditional jobs disappear and new ones emerge, education and training are the vital link between people and the jobs of tomorrow.

Building a workforce ready to care

By 2050, it is estimated that one in four people in the region will be over 60 years old. As this shift accelerates, increased demand for health, social, and elderly services is boosting the care economy, which is set to become one of the region's fastest-growing sectors.

China, with one of the largest and fastest ageing populations, is setting the standard for building excellence into elderly care, with a model of community, home-based, and institutional care to be replicated nationwide. With ADB's support, the Yichang [Elderly Care System Development Project](#) has established new elderly care facilities and an innovative training centre, developing multi-skilled 'talent teams' of healthcare and social welfare professionals. In Liaoning Province, ADB's [Development of Geriatric Nursing Policy principles and Training Program](#) helped develop the first geriatric nursing curriculum, introducing a three-tier training system for caregivers, nurses, and specialists. The curriculum became a national standard for geriatric nursing education and gave elderly care workers career recognition and progression. In the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, ADB's [Elderly Care and Health Care Integration and Public-Private Partnership Project](#) is building local expertise and enhancing coordination among elderly care medical institutions.

ADB is also helping Turkmenistan make its healthcare system more responsive to the country's changing health needs through the Improving [Nursing Quality and Capacity](#)



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Project. The construction of a new climate-resilient facility at the Ashgabat Nursing School will enhance clinical learning through the use of simulation labs, and teaching methods and curricula will be updated in line with international standards.

Investing in health and elderly care systems will become increasingly important as populations across the region age. Flexible training programs can help women, who often take on caregiving roles in their communities, enter and stay active in the workforce. This will be crucial for maintaining productivity in ageing societies and can also be a powerful driver for inclusion across the region.

Growing SMART: Education for next-gen farmers

The combined impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and labor shortages resulting from increased migration to cities are creating extreme challenges in agriculture, leading to decreased productivity and food shortages. Yet the sector continues to play a fundamental role in supporting livelihoods and food security across the region. Thankfully, initiatives to explore the potential of technology are starting to transform the way young farmers work. The blend of traditional know-how with digital tools and AI means that high-tech agriculture is creating new opportunities for sustainable growth and resilience.

According to ADB's 2022 report, [Implementing a Green Recovery in Southeast Asia](#), agricultural research, digitalisation, and climate adaptation could generate millions of new green and tech-enabled jobs in agriculture by 2030. But the extent to which farmers can seize these opportunities depends on the quality and relevance of the available training programs.

In Thailand, the ADB-supported [Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture for Enhanced Recovery and Sustainability of Highlands Project](#) has helped education and capacity-building programs to update farming practices related to water efficiency and crop productivity. Introducing digital tools for data-driven crop planning and farm management, the program has contributed to modern agriculture practices while safeguarding rural livelihoods.

With ADB's investments, agriculture is not a dying sector but a transforming one. Incorporating technology into traditional education and training programs is helping young and experienced farmers, as well as their communities, benefit from the green and digital transition and avoid being left behind.

Powering the green transition

The shift towards net-zero emissions means clean energy is becoming one of the region's largest job creators, generating up to 30 million jobs by 2030 in Southeast Asia alone. These emerging jobs need workers with a new set of multi-disciplinary skills that strengthen technical capacities and support problem-solving and critical thinking.



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ADB's investments in schools, universities, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are pivotal to helping the region move closer toward its climate goals.

Projects such as the [Secondary Education for Human Capital Competitiveness Project](#) in Cambodia are embedding sustainability and digital skills into school curricula. Increased access to STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), combined with 21st-century human skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, will help develop a skilled workforce ready for the 'green-collar' jobs of the future.

Universities, too, such as the ADB-supported [Assam Skills University](#) in India, are helping to speed up the delivery of industry-responsive skills, while also spearheading climate innovation and research. People remain at the heart of the green and digital transition, and investing in their skills will help turn goals into accomplishments.

Smart water, smarter skills

A country's natural resources are a source of resilience and opportunity, and managing them effectively requires technical competencies and expertise. With the help of technology, aged and damaged infrastructure and ecosystems can be restored and even improved.

The ADB-supported [Climate-Smart Water Management Improvement Project](#) in Uzbekistan combines cutting-edge technology with hands-on training to address challenges in the water management system. By equipping workers and engineers with both the digital and technical skills they need, participants learn to utilize Internet of Things devices for leak detection and data analysis, enabling them to monitor water loss and quality. The program has since been expanded to include additional training modules in project management and digital innovation, all delivered through a combination of e-learning, classroom lessons, and practical training.

In Fiji, ADB has supported the [Healthy Oceans and Water Security Improvement Project](#), which has transformed the Suva Kinoya treatment plant, restoring water quality and fragile marine ecosystems. But that's not all. The development of a regional training hub to train local technicians and young trainees helped turn an immediate infrastructure repair into a long-term investment in people, skills, and local communities.

Education for liveable cities and inclusive growth

Across the region's growing cities, ADB is helping urban spaces become greener, more liveable, and ready for the future.

The [Liveable Cities Investment Project for Balanced Development](#) in Georgia aims to revitalise urban spaces. Libraries and sports complexes are being built and refurbished



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which is creating new jobs and fostering a greater sense of community. Around 20 new kindergartens are increasing the number of children accessing early education. This is helping mothers return to work, boosting family finances and local economies. Meanwhile, new learning and innovation centers focused on sustainable and digital urban planning are equipping students and municipal staff with the smart skills needed to rejuvenate important cultural sites, which will support the country's ambition to boost its growing tourism sector.

The result is a virtuous cycle, where access to quality and targeted education leads to stronger local communities, helping cities become more livable, cohesive, and resilient.

The creative connection

The digital revolution is also giving rise to the growth of digital and creative industries, linking art, technology, and entrepreneurship to high-quality, high-skilled jobs. Through regional initiatives such as the [Digital Development Facility for Asia and the Pacific](#) and the [Quality Jobs and the Future of Work](#) program, ADB is helping countries develop policies, training programs, and digital infrastructure that nurture creative talent. In Thailand, the government has developed a Content Lab as part of its Creative Economy initiative. This supports local talent in competing for global digital content production opportunities. In smaller nations such as the Maldives, the broad spectrum of ADB-supported digital development and skills programs are stimulating creative entrepreneurship, contributing to innovation in key sectors, including tourism.

Learning for an evolving future

The jobs of tomorrow lie at the intersections of the labour market, where health meets technology, agriculture meets data, and water meets smart infrastructure. Across Asia and the Pacific, this future is already taking shape, supported by education and training systems that are themselves evolving to be flexible, cross-disciplinary, and responsive.

As technology advances, ADB is helping countries invest in their people to harness their creativity, adaptability, and capacity to learn, enabling them to boost economic productivity and thrive in a rapidly changing future.

Case study details

Project	US\$	Status	Link to project data sheet
Hubei Yichang Comprehensive Elderly Care	150 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/49309-002/main#project-pds



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Demonstration Project, PRC			
Development of Geriatric Nursing Policy Principles and Training Program in Liaoning Province, PRC	400,000	Closed (2020)	https://www.adb.org/projects/49313-001/main
Demonstration of Guangxi Elderly Care and Health Care Integration and Public-Private Partnership Project, PRC	100 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/50391-001/main#project-pds
Improving Nursing Quality and Capacity Project, Turkmenistan	75 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/54032-001/main
Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture for Enhanced Recovery and Sustainability of Highlands, Thailand	2 million	Closed (2025)	https://www.adb.org/projects/53099-001/main
Secondary Education for Human Capital Competitiveness Project, Cambodia	80 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/57174-001/main#project-pds
Assam Skills University Project, India	112 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/53277-002/main#project-pds
Climate-Smart Water Management Improvement Project, Uzbekistan	125 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/54272-001/main#:~:text=The%20project%20aims%20to%20improve%20water%20security%2C%20reduce,of%20its%20water%20supply%20and%20sanitation%20%28WSS%29%20utilities.
Healthy Oceans and Water Security Improvement Project, Fiji	135 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/57294-001/main
Liveable Cities Investment Project for Balanced Development, Georgia	119.9 million	Active	https://www.adb.org/projects/53118-001/main#project-pds