



Education and skills for the 21st-century: The Asian Development Bank's impact across Asia and the Pacific

Across Asia and the Pacific, the way people live and work is changing with incredible speed. Digitalization, the climate crisis, and shifting labor markets are reshaping lives and redefining the world of work. As new jobs emerge and traditional roles either evolve or disappear, individuals need to build and develop a new set of skills to help them navigate and thrive in this changing landscape. Education and training systems are at the heart of this skills delivery challenge.

This series of nine impact stories highlights how the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is helping its member countries prepare for this evolving future. By modernizing education systems to embrace a lifelong approach to skills development, countries can ensure that learning doesn't stop as soon as work starts. This is key to harnessing the potential of the region's human capital, helping to build sustainable and inclusive economies.

While each story looks at the region's progress through a different educational lens, they all share one common theme: a focus on high-quality learning. The region has made huge progress in expanding access to education, but it is the focus on quality and relevance that underpin its future development. High-quality education needs skilled teachers and robust systems to help create supportive environments for every stage of the learning journey.

To answer the region's calls for higher-skilled, higher-value jobs, ADB is working with its clients and partners to strengthen science and technology education, improve technical and vocational training (TVET), and forge stronger links between learning and industry. TVET, which was once seen to be a second-choice pathway, is becoming a gateway for future-ready skills delivery for learners of all ages and backgrounds. Universities, too, are evolving into hubs of innovation and research, helping build the foundations of knowledge-driven economies.

The digital transformation appears throughout the series as both a challenge and an opportunity. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how learners without access to devices, connectivity, or digital skills found themselves quickly excluded from a world that turned digital overnight. The stories show that for ADB, the digital transformation is not about technology *per se*, but about enabling more personalized, inclusive, and resilient education that can help close the region's digital divide.

Climate change also features in the stories, as an ever-present challenge across the region. Its scale and urgency need new solutions, and the impact stories show how education is encouraging people to 'think green' and contribute to a climate-neutral, more interconnected future. Green skills, climate resilience, and cross-sector training are increasingly embedded across curricula, responding directly to labor market demands for people with a blend of technical, digital and 21st-century human skills.



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Together, these nine impact stories provide a glimpse into the breadth of ADB's work in improving education and skills development across the region. They paint a picture of education systems in motion, innovating to become more flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of changing societies. Above all, they underscore one clear message: it is people who will drive the region's progress. By investing in projects that equip learners of all ages with the skills and opportunities they need, countries can build a more prosperous, resilient, and hopeful future.

