

Management Response to IED's Sector-wide Evaluation of ADB's Support for Health in Asia and the Pacific, 2011–2024

On 01 September 2025, the Director General, Independent Evaluation Department, received the following response from the Director General, Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships Department on behalf of Management:

I. General Comments

1. Management welcomes the Sector-Wide Evaluation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Support for Health in Asia and the Pacific, 2011–2024 (the report) from the Independent Evaluation Department (IED). The findings provide timely and valuable insights that will enable ADB to enhance and expand its technical and financing support to its developing member countries (DMCs) to improve health outcomes and strengthen their health systems.

2. ADB and its DMCs face evolving health challenges—such as rapid demographic shifts, rising non-communicable diseases, persistent communicable diseases, climate-related health risks, and nutrition issues, alongside increased demand for universal health coverage (UHC). Managing these complex challenges requires coordinated, innovative and cross-sector solutions. Management appreciates the evaluation's recognition that health is essential for sustainable and inclusive development, and how the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic highlighted the need for increased investment in the health sector.

3. ADB's ability to rapidly collaborate across sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted its unique mandate, capacities, and financing for leveraging cross-sectoral action. Investments in areas such as water and sanitation, education, infrastructure, finance, and public management have supported broader health sector resilience, security and sustainability. Enhanced OneADB collaboration and deeper interdepartmental partnerships remain essential for maximizing these impacts and strengthening health systems.

4. Management appreciates the recognition that, even before the pandemic, ADB strengthened its health sector and increased health staffing which contributed to ADB's rapid support for many DMCs during COVID-19. Management is also committed to strengthening knowledge management in the health sector. ADB's TA programs in the health sector continue to be guided by country contexts and emerging sector priorities and respond to varied needs in the area of capacity development, project preparation and implementation, and policy advice.

II. Management Response to the Recommendations

5. **Recommendation 1. ADB should update its health strategic framework to provide a clear vision and mandate in meeting the rising health needs in Asia and the Pacific.**

Management agrees. ADB and its DMCs face persistent and evolving health challenges—such as rapid demographic shifts, rising non-communicable and communicable diseases, climate risks, and nutrition issues—which require an updated, forward-looking actionable health strategic framework. Replacing legacy policies including the 1999 Health Sector Policy and other directional and guidance documents with a comprehensive strategic framework aligned to ADB's Strategy 2030 midterm review and regional health priorities will equip ADB to deliver clearer guidance, coherent solutions, and effective support for

national and regional health sector needs. ADB will undertake a consultative process with internal and external stakeholders to prepare a new Board-endorsed health strategy.

6. Recommendation 2. In implementing its updated health strategic framework, ADB should provide clear guidance and incentivization on how to operationalize the health and multisector approach for better health outcomes.

Management agrees. The new health strategic framework will include management guidance for direct health support and multisector interventions, including robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which will capture health impacts and health co-benefits. ADB proposes to incorporate health objectives and indicators into all relevant multisector projects. As needed, technical guidance will be developed to enable relevant sector teams to integrate health components, including shared performance metrics to demonstrate impact and encourage cross-sector ownership, incentivized by the proposed credit-sharing mechanism. This will ensure that health priorities are embedded across other ADB sectors to improve health outcomes and respond to cross-cutting priorities including climate and health, and nutrition.

7. Recommendation 3. ADB should develop and implement a strategic staffing and resource plan aligned with the updated health strategic framework.

Management agrees. ADB will assess resource needs and identify skills gaps through the bank-wide WPBF process to ensure alignment with corporate targets and priorities, while maintaining balance across overall institutional priorities. ADB will continue to invest in robust partnerships with global and regional health agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), other development partners, and technical institutions. ADB will continue to also leverage other partnerships, including the recently launched UHC Practitioners and Experts Knowledge Exchange and Resources (UHC PEERS), and collaborate to address knowledge gaps, deliver technical assistance, and enhance design and implementation of health initiatives.

8. Recommendation 4. ADB should strengthen country-focused diagnostic work and knowledge management to complement its demand-driven approach to health.

Management agrees. ADB will increase investment in country-focused diagnostic work on health—drawing on existing platforms, networks, regional collaborations, and partner analysis—to inform project design, sector strategies, and policy dialogue. ADB will also undertake cross-regional studies to assess key health sector domains. These studies and related knowledge products will be grounded in meaningful, participatory engagement with stakeholders to ensure that results directly inform future programming and make ADB health operations more agile and responsive to the evolving needs of DMCs.