

Background

Suicide claims more than 727,000 lives each year, and 73% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) [1].

Asia accounts for approximately 60% of global suicides [2], and the WHO South-East Asia Region alone contributes 39% [3].

Countries across South and Southeast Asia face shared barriers: stigma, under-reporting, fragmented prevention efforts, and limited health workforce [2,3]

Zero Suicide is a system-wide framework for suicide prevention in healthcare. It is grounded in Henry Ford Health's pioneering work [4] and is organized around seven elements [5]

Recognizing these shared challenges, Henry Ford Health, the G.T.A Foundation, and country representatives jointly established the Zero Suicide International Asia Alliance, with the G.T.A Foundation as secretariat. The Zero Suicide International Asia Alliance seeks to foster shared learning and support the evidence-based cultural adaptation of the Zero Suicide framework across Asia.



Figure 1. The seven elements of the Zero Suicide framework [5].

Aim & Objectives

Aim: To build a regional platform that connects Asian countries to share evidence, experience, and resources, turning evidence into action for suicide prevention.

- Establish shared governance through a regional hub and a jointly signed charter.
- Create a platform for cross-country learning on what works and what remains challenging.
- Advocate for suicide prevention as a national, regional, and global health priority.
- Strengthen cross-border communication and coordination among member countries

Alliance Structure



Figure 2. Member countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, with partner Henry Ford Health (USA).

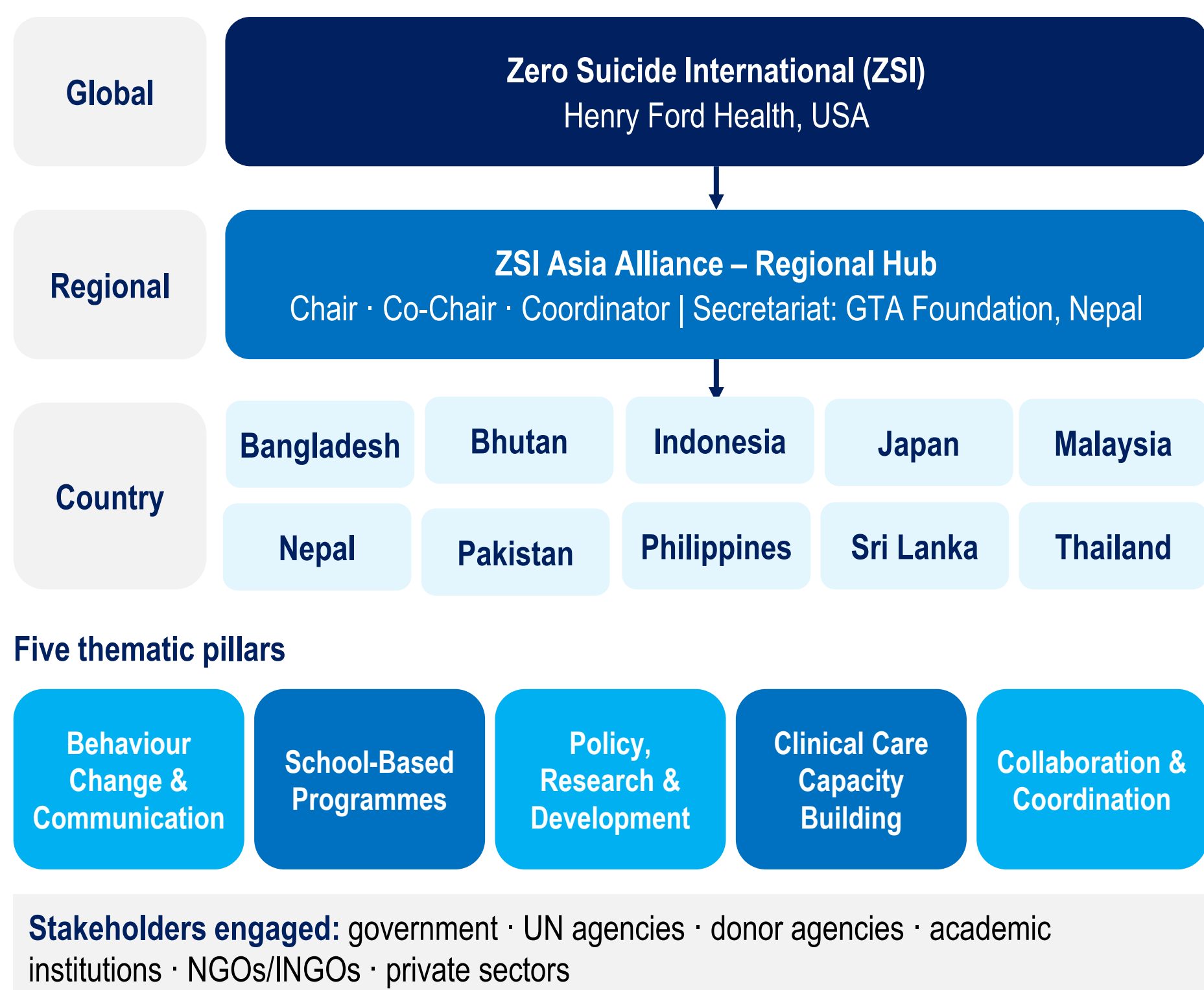


Figure 3. Alliance governance across global, regional and country levels.

Key Activities & Milestones



Figure 4. Alliance journey, October 2024 – May 2026 (filled markers = high-level milestones).

Regional Webinar Series

The webinar series introduced the Zero Suicide model to stakeholders across Asia, with the aim of establishing a regional hub, building local leadership and capacity, and fostering collaborative partnerships among member countries. Subsequent sessions provided a platform for each country to present its national suicide prevention and mental health context, including effective practices and persistent challenges.

Inaugural Assembly & Charter Signing

The Alliance convened its Inaugural Assembly on 27–28 October 2025 in Dhulikhel, Nepal. Inaugurated by senior officials of Nepal's Ministry of Health and Food Safety, the Assembly integrated high-level advocacy with technical deliberations and concluded with the formal signing of the Alliance Charter by country representatives.



Figure 5. Zero Suicide International Asia Alliance Charter Signing

Key Insights from the Inaugural Assembly

- Barriers are structural rather than conceptual:** Workforce shortages, persistent stigma, weak surveillance systems and mental health allocations below 1% of health expenditure constrain implementation across the region.
- Core Zero Suicide elements are adaptable:** Screening, safety planning, caring contacts and risk stratification can be delivered by trained non-specialists through task-sharing.
- Schools and communities are key entry points:** School-based programmes and trusted local actors, including teachers, volunteers and religious leaders, offer scalable and culturally acceptable pathways to care.
- Cultural contextualization is the foremost priority:** Hybrid top-down and bottom-up models, informed by local evidence, should precede scale-up.
- Sustainable financing requires reframing:** Suicide prevention should be positioned as a multisectoral development issue, with advocacy for 5–7% of national health budgets to be allocated to mental health.
- Evidence and collaboration underpin progress:** Strengthened surveillance, psychological autopsy studies and regional research collaboration are essential for proactive, data-informed prevention

Knowledge Hub & Advocacy

Knowledge Hub

A regional knowledge hub gathers information on suicide prevention work in each member country including policies, programmes, data, research and resources, and makes it openly available on one web page.



Advocacy & Partnerships

Regional advocacy engagements with government bodies, UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs promoted the Zero Suicide framework, harmonized mental health and suicide prevention efforts, strengthened the prioritization of suicide prevention among policymakers and mobilized support for the Alliance.

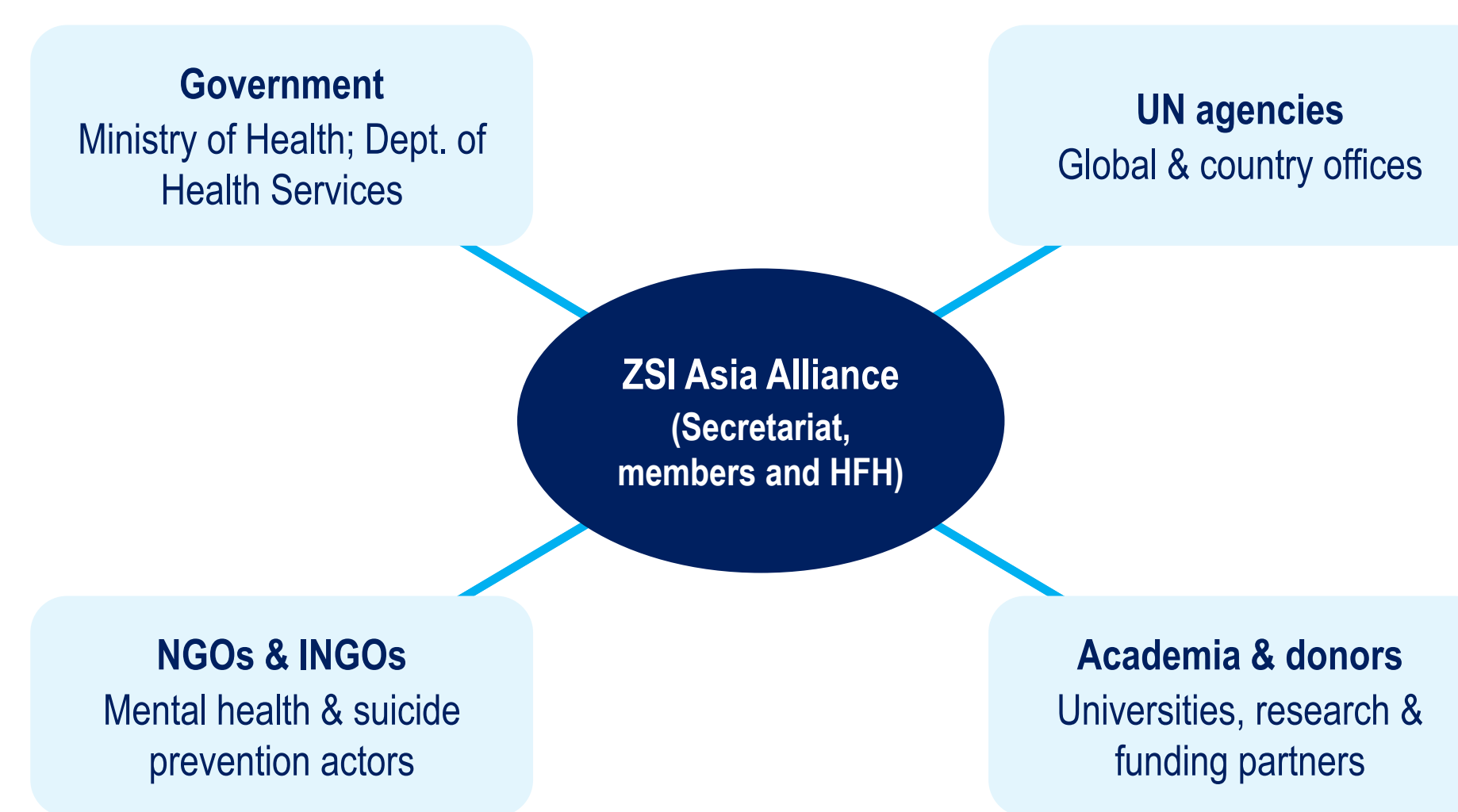


Figure 6. Advocacy and partnership ecosystem

ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

79th World Health Assembly (WHA79) · Official Side Event

“A Global Pursuit of Suicide Prevention: Turning Evidence into Action”

Jointly supported with the Government of Nepal, the side event carried the voices and experience of Asian countries to global health leaders



Figure 7. WHA79 official side event meeting



Figure 8. Minister of Health, Nepal addressing the side event meeting on prioritization of suicide prevention

Conclusion

Within two years, the Alliance has evolved from a concept into a formalized regional network, underpinned by shared governance, a signed charter, a regional knowledge hub and an engaged community of practice.

Way Forward

- Expand the knowledge hub through contributions from all member countries.
- Publish a collective manuscript on indigenous knowledge and cultural case studies in mental health.
- Establish shared regional priorities and pursue collaborative funding opportunities.
- Support the culturally adapted implementation of the Zero Suicide framework in member countries.
- Represent the Alliance in regional and global forums

Acknowledgements

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