



YOUTH LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Brief Context

YOUTH CO:LAB

Project Co-Leads



Citi Foundation



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes **the important role of youth in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and calls for action against the challenges faced by young people that limit their economic, social, and political inclusion. Today, young people are **more connected, creative, informed, and persuasive** than any previous generation. Young people are responding to the challenges of today with innovative approaches, contributing fresh ideas, creating the world they want, and driving human development for themselves, their communities, and their societies.

At the same time, of the **660 million young people in the region**, around **160 million are not in employment, education, or training (NEET)**, facing dire economic insecurity. In addition, many young people are left out of decision-making processes, which further contributes to their marginalization and exclusion.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Co-created in 2017 by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and the **Citi Foundation**, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for Asia-Pacific countries to **invest in and empower youth** to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs through **leadership, social innovation, and entrepreneurship**. By developing 21st skills, catalyzing and sustaining youth-led startups and social enterprises across the region, Youth Co:Lab is positioning young people front and center in order to solve the region's most pressing challenges.

In addition to supporting youth entrepreneurship, Youth Co:Lab also works closely with **multiple stakeholders across the region**, including governments, civil society, and the private sector, to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem and policy support to better enable young people to take the lead on innovative solutions that will help meet the SDGs.



PROJECT OUTPUTS



National and regional dialogues, social innovation challenges, and other events across the region to develop 21st century skills, foster social entrepreneurship, provide leadership training opportunities, and raise awareness about the SDGs, all for young people in the Asia Pacific region.



Youth Empowerment Alliances to support young entrepreneurs – particularly young women and marginalized youth from underserved communities– by connecting them with resources, mentors, partners, and other in-kind support to develop their ideas into viable business models for sustainable social impact.



Youth-oriented and youth-friendly policies, being developed and adopted, on a national and regional level through thought leadership and a multi-stakeholder platform for engagement, especially engaging with national level agencies and institutions to ensure no youth is left behind.



Action-oriented research that informs and improves all aspects of engagement with the youth participants. Better programme delivery, greater awareness of existing challenges, improved understanding of the core thematic areas affecting youth like Climate Change, Gender Inclusivity, Marginalization, Digital Disruption and more.

PROJECT RESULTS & WHAT'S AHEAD

Since 2017, Youth Co:Lab has been implemented in **28 countries and territories** in Asia and the Pacific. The national dialogues, regional summits and social innovation challenges have reached over **200,000 participants**. The initiative has benefited over **11,000 young social entrepreneurs** and helped to launch or improve over **1,240 youth-led social enterprises**. Youth Co:Lab has also established partnerships with **203 key ecosystem players** through a Youth Empowerment Alliance. With a comprehensive **Leave No One Behind** agenda, Youth Co:Lab has curated programmes to continue supporting some of the most marginalized youth from underserved communities.

By end of 2022, Youth Co:Lab aims to expand to 30 countries and territories, deepen mentorship capacity for youth entrepreneurs through the Springboard programme, engage ecosystem partners in the development of young people's 21st century skills, and advance policy solutions to strengthen the enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship in the region.



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