

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

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the important role of youth in achieving 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 connected, creative, informed, and persuasive and are responding to challenges with innovative approaches and contributing fresh ideas. They strive to create the world they want and drive human development for themselves, their communities, and their societies. At the same time, of over 600 million young people in the region, around 160 million are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), facing direct economic insecurity. In addition, many young people are left out of decision-making processes, further contributing to their marginalization and exclusion.

## 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.

## OUTPUTS



### STRENGTHENED ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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



### CATALYZING YOUTH-LED SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The Springboard Programme is a startup support platform providing ongoing support for young SDG innovators by facilitating mentoring, knowledge exchange, networking and showcasing. Springboard PLUS is a six-month virtual pre-accelerator programme dedicated to enhancing investment readiness for youth-led social enterprises.

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## STRENGTHENING THE ECOSYSTEM FOR YOUTH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Youth Co:Lab connects ecosystem stakeholders through its key partnership structure, Youth Empowerment Alliance. The Springboard Amplifier Programme provides a peer-to-peer learning platform for Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs) across the Asia-Pacific region to connect and strengthen their capacities to support young social entrepreneurs and innovators.

Youth Co:Lab is a founding member of the Strategic Intelligence Hub, which serves as a nerve centre for regional development partners such as UNDP, Citi Foundation, The Commonwealth, ILO and UNESCAP to organize thought leadership initiatives and build a community of practice consisting of regional and national policy and programmatic leaders. Youth Co:Lab produces action-oriented research studies and toolkits in collaboration with its partners to support evidence-based programme development.

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## RESULTS & WHAT'S AHEAD

Since 2017, Youth Co:Lab has supported young entrepreneurs and youth with aspirations to start their businesses in 28 countries and territories across Asia-Pacific.

The national dialogues, regional summits and social innovation challenges have reached over 390,000 participants. The initiative has benefitted over 48,000 young aspiring and existing social entrepreneurs and helped launch or improve over 3,900 youth-led social enterprises.

Youth Co:Lab has established transformative partnerships with over 300 key ecosystem players through its Youth Empowerment Alliance and built the capacity of more than 100 entrepreneur support organisations (ESOs) to make their services more inclusive for young entrepreneurs.

There are action-oriented publications produced by Youth Co:Lab, supporting the project's contribution to system-level changes at the national and regional levels. 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 and strengthen the capacities of entrepreneurship support organizations serving young social entrepreneurs across the region.

March 2026



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