Citi Foundation

Youth Co:Lab's
Ten Years in the Making

A Movement Built Together

A ten-year impact report on **youth leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship** in Asia and the Pacific

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About UNDP

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with a broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, UNDP helps nations build integrated, lasting solutions for people and the planet.

For more information, visit www.undp.org

About Youth Co:Lab

Co-created in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth, so that they can accelerate the implementation of the SGDs through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship.

For more information, visit www.youthcolab.org

About Citi Foundation

The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. We invest in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyse job opportunities for youth and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant communities. The Citi Foundation's "More than Philanthropy" approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi Foundation and its people to fulfil our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation.

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FOREWORD

Youth Co:Lab was born from a shared vision between UNDP and the Citi Foundation that young people across Asia-Pacific had the potential to be powerful drivers of innovation – ready to be supported as they create solutions to society's most pressing challenges. This collaboration was anchored in a genuine alignment of values and a relationship that grew stronger over time. UNDP brought the regional programmeming and development mandate to the table. Citi Foundation leveraged its resources and experience in youth economic empowerment. The movement went on to grow with the young entrepreneurs who believed in their ideas and their ambition, the ecosystem partners who opened their networks, and the policymakers who joined and helped shape the conversations. Together, we built something none of us could have built alone.

And what we built is real. Over ten years, Youth Co:Lab has grown from a small pilot into a regional platform that has reached and supported 400,000 young people across more than 30 countries and territories, and contributed to national policy frameworks that will long inform agendas and approaches. Behind those numbers are ventures that have crossed borders, public services delivered by youth-built technology, and community livelihoods transformed by young people who were supported with the resources to succeed.

What we are most proud of, however, is who we reached. From the start, we sought to give a voice to those facing barriers and limited opportunities: young women navigating systems historically not designed for them, entrepreneurs with disabilities redefining what innovation looks like, indigenous youth building solutions rooted in their own communities, and young people on the move with no guaranteed safety net. Their leadership is not a footnote in this story. It is the story.

When Youth Co:Lab launched, the challenge was to build connections and capacity to support a regional youth entrepreneurship landscape that was fragmented and underinvested. Ideas had few places to go. Many governments were interested yet found it challenging to tap into innovation easily. Ecosystems were full of good intentions but short on connection. A decade later, the architecture looks fundamentally different. Policies carry youth voices. Incubators have become regional connectors. Young entrepreneurs have moved from pitching in competitions to influencing national strategies, delivering public services, and building ventures across borders. That shift did not happen by accident. It happened because thousands of people chose, again and again, to work across systems and across cultures.

And yet the work is not finished. Too many young people still face barriers that ambition alone cannot dismantle. The financing gaps are real. Communities are still experiencing social and economic challenges. And in too many places, young people continue to remain on the edges of social and economic opportunity.

That is why this report is not a conclusion. It is a reflection and a guide for how we can learn from the decade of Youth Co:Lab for the next chapter. We know that economic opportunity for young people lies at the heart of a thriving community, and the village that built this movement is large, and growing. As we enter a future that is rapidly changing, we must take what we have achieved so far and continue to innovate, so that we can best meet the moment for the young people of Asia-Pacific. Every young person it reaches multiplies what is possible for all of us.

There is a saying: it takes a village to raise a child. For Youth Co:Lab, this has always extended further, because just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to build and sustain a movement. That community is what this report is really about.

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Partners

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The team also acknowledges the contributions of the more than 300 ecosystem partners, government agencies, entrepreneur support organisations and young social entrepreneurs across Asia and the Pacific whose experiences and insights form the foundation of this report.

Team

Youth Co:Lab's evolution has been shaped by the contributions of more than 200 staff, UN Volunteers, and personnel across regional and country offices who have been part of the initiative since its inception in 2016. As a youth-led initiative, Youth Co:Lab has invested in building a team composed largely of young professionals, many of whom joined at the early stages of their careers and have since grown into leadership roles within the initiative and beyond.

This commitment has also extended to fostering a team that reflects the diversity of the region, including individuals from underrepresented backgrounds and with intersecting identities. Their lived experiences and perspectives have played a critical role in shaping Youth Co:Lab's approach, ensuring that inclusion is not only an outcome of the initiative's work, but a principle embedded in how it is designed, delivered, and sustained. Youth Co:Lab owes its success to the people who have made it their mission to reaching every young person everywhere.

Layout and Design

The layout and design were creatively done by Deepesh Sangtani.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CICETE	China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESO	Entrepreneur Support Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Intellectual Property
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and others
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MSC	Most Significant Change
MYE	Meaningful Youth Engagement
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGX	Singapore Exchange
SIH	Strategic Intelligence Hub
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VC	Venture Capital
YCL	Youth Co:Lab
YEA	Youth Empowerment Alliance
YECAP	Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform
YEP-AP	Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia and the Pacific
YSE	Young Social Entrepreneur
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asia-Pacific is home to over 60% of the world's youth population[1], approximately 660–750 million individuals aged 15–24. Yet persistent structural barriers, youth unemployment rates of 10–20%, and the fact that roughly one-quarter of regional youth are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) underscore an urgent development imperative. Youth Co:Lab was founded in 2017 as a flagship initiative co-led by UNDP and the Citi Foundation to address these gaps through leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship. This report synthesizes ten years of contribution across the Asia-Pacific region (2017–2026) and informs strategic positioning for 2026 and beyond.

Youth Co:Lab operates across three interconnected streams: upstream, with governments through policy integration and national dialogues; midstream, by strengthening Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) and embedding inclusive practices; and downstream, by directly supporting young people, including young women, persons with disabilities, and indigenous youth, through mentorship, micro-grants, and targeted acceleration. Over the past 10 years, this approach has engaged around 400,000 individuals, supported over 48,000 young entrepreneurs, helped launch or strengthen close to 4,000 youth-led enterprises across 30 countries, and mobilized over 700 ecosystem partnerships.

These numbers reflect real change on the ground. In Indonesia, Youth Co:Lab contributed to the country's first National Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy. In the Philippines, a youth-built AI solution incubated through Youth Co:Lab was adopted by the national Department of Health. In Pakistan, DeafTawk, a sign language platform co-founded by entrepreneurs with disabilities supported through Youth Co:Lab, now serves 95,000 users across five countries. These examples, expanded in later sections, represent only a fraction of the changes catalysed across the region.

Over the past decade, the Asia-Pacific youth entrepreneurship landscape has shifted from fragmented, small-scale support to coordinated, system-level ecosystems, and is now moving toward a future in which entrepreneurship drives inclusion, resilience, and climate transition. Youth Co:Lab has offered partners and donors a proven, scalable platform that combines policy influence, a strong multiplier effect through ecosystem partners, targeted inclusion of underserved groups, and a unique integration of climate, digital, and social innovation. To sustain and scale this momentum, Youth Co:Lab is seeking strategic partners and investors committed to reaching every country in the Asia-Pacific region, deepening climate entrepreneurship, strengthening alumni as peer-led ecosystems, and unlocking catalytic finance for youth-led ventures.

A decade of evidence has demonstrated that meaningful impact is not created through single interventions in silos, but through sustained collaboration across systems, communities, and generations. This next chapter of Youth Co:Lab aims to move from dozens of success stories to ensuring every young person, regardless of gender, background, or ability, can contribute to and benefit from development. Ultimately, it affirms that impact is not a moment, but a movement: co-created, evolving, and powered by the shared ambition of young people and those who invest in their potential.

Image 1: Results Snapshot

1. Strategic Intelligence Hub. (n.d.). Policy Brief: Including Youth Entrepreneurs in the Green Transition.

INTRODUCTION

Young people across Asia-Pacific continue to redefine what is possible when youth leadership, innovation, and collective action converge. The region is home to the largest generation of young people in history. This demographic reality encompasses approximately 660 million to 750 million individuals aged 15-24.[2 3 4] This generation sits at the heart of a historic demographic shift that could unlock demographic dividends if fully harnessed. However, despite this immense potential, economic and social systems across the region have not evolved fast enough to match young people's aspirations. Persistent inequalities, uneven development trajectories, and structural barriers continue to shape who gets access to opportunities and who is left behind.

A Note on Terminology

This report uses several terms that carry specific meaning in the context of Youth Co:Lab's work across Asia and the Pacific. For clarity and consistency:

Youth: Used interchangeably in this report to refer to individuals aged 15–24 (the UN standard definition) and 15–30 (the broader definition applied in many national contexts across Asia and the Pacific). Where age ranges differ materially across Programme streams or country contexts, these are noted.

Youth-led enterprise: An enterprise in which at least one co-founder or a majority of the founding team is a young person (aged 15–30) who holds decision-making authority over the venture's direction. Programme eligibility thresholds have varied across cohorts and are specified in relevant sections.

Supported: Refers to any youth who received a structured form of Programme engagement through Youth Co:Lab including participation in national dialogues, innovation challenges, Springboard, or Springboard Amplifier cohorts. Single-event participants and Springboard alumni are both counted unless otherwise specified.

Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA): The broader network of ecosystem actors including governments, Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs), private sector partners, civil society, and young people themselves. They have been convened and mobilized through Youth Co:Lab across 30 countries and territories.

2. Youth Co:Lab (2023). Inclusive Youth Entrepreneurship Guidebook for Entrepreneur Support Organizations in Asia and the Pacific.
3. Fortune. (2023). Available on: Fortune. Accessed on: April 2, 2026. https://fortune.com/europe/2023/01/25/world-population-little-say-decisions-future-young-people-seen-and-heard-halls-of-power-boynton-vasileva-blazev/
4. UN. (2024). World Population Prospects.

WORLD POPULATION
(AGE 15-24)

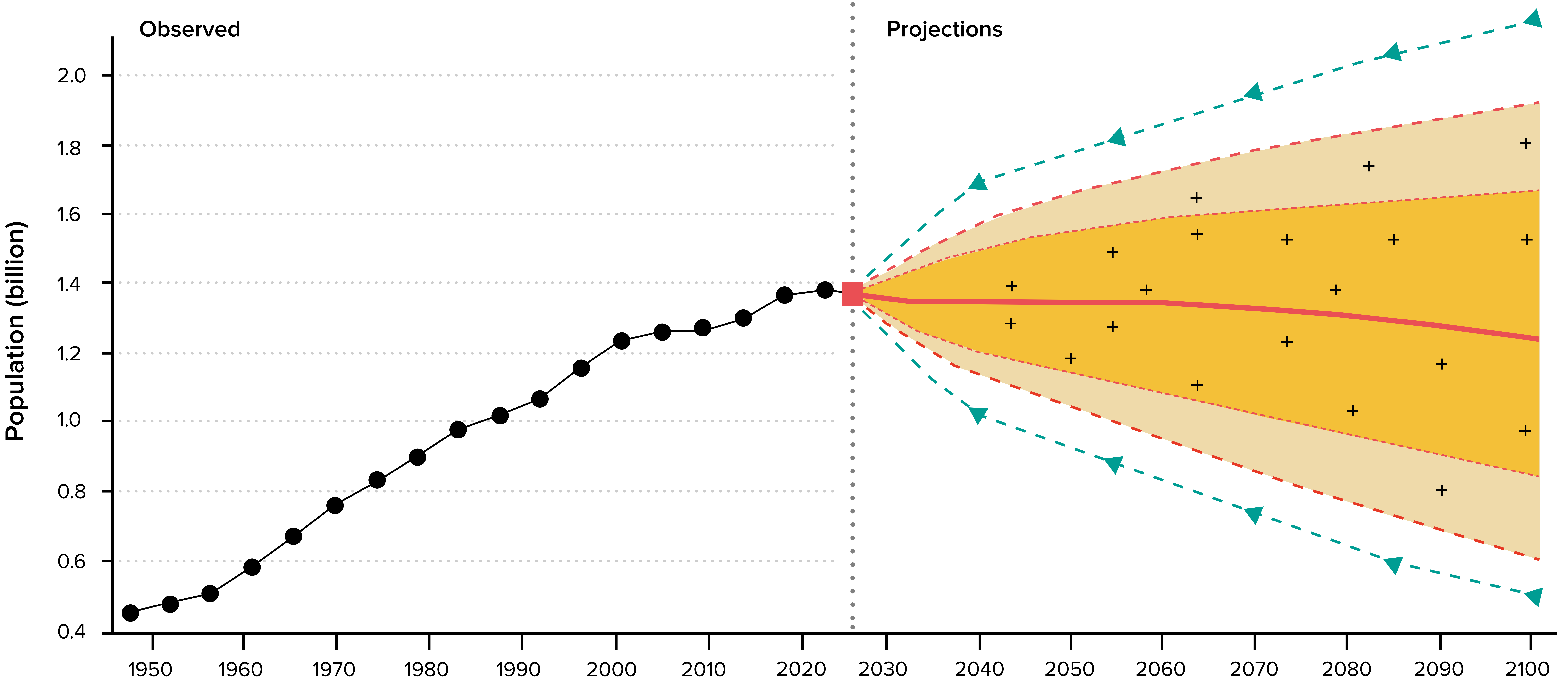

Image 2: Rate of youth (ages 15-24) unemployment rates

Data Source: 2024 United Nations, DESA, Population Division, Licensed under Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0 IGO.
United Nations, DESA, Population Division. World Population Prospects 2024. http://population.un.org/wpp/

In many Asia-Pacific countries, youth unemployment remains significantly higher than adult unemployment, reflecting a global pattern where young people face disproportionate barriers to labour market entry. Youth unemployment rates across Asia typically range between 10 and 16 percent, with some countries exceeding 20 percent, according to World Bank and regional datasets.[5][6] Approximately one quarter of the region's youth population are neither in employment, education, nor training (NEET)[7] and even when young people secure employment, job quality remains a major concern. Informality continues to dominate labour markets across the region, as highlighted by the ILO's Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2024, which notes the slow progress in tackling informality and inequality.[8] These challenges are amplified by rapid technological change, widening skills mismatches, and persistent gaps in social protection systems. Joint assessments by the ILO and ADB further warn that youth in the region face heightened employment vulnerabilities, including automation risks and unstable labour market conditions.[9]

Alongside these structural challenges, the past decade has produced clear signs of progress driven by young people themselves. Youth-led initiatives, enterprises and civic organisations have contributed to policy debates, strengthened local ecosystems and expanded opportunities for their peers. These developments illustrate the growing influence of youth leadership in the region and offer a strong evidence base for UNDP's next phase of strategic action.

The Youth Moonshot is UNDP's bold leap toward a future shaped by young people through leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It aims to reach every young person, everywhere in the Asia-Pacific region, to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and lead transformations for people and planet. The initiative is supported and grounded in trusted partnerships, flexible, catalytic resources, and a forward-looking approach.

The Moonshot is anchored in UNDP's Youth Empowerment Portfolio in Asia and the Pacific, which provides a strategic framework for advancing youth inclusion, innovation and leadership across the region. It supports young people as agents of change through initiatives that span economic empowerment, digital transformation, climate action, civic engagement and social inclusion. The portfolio adopts a systems approach, working across policy, Programme and partnership levels to create enabling environments for youth development.

Within this portfolio, Youth Co:Lab stands as a flagship initiative co-led by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, and has evolved over the past decade into a leading regional platform for advancing youth leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific. Youth Co:Lab's evolution over three phases from 2017 to 2026 is documented in detail in the Evolution of Youth Co:Lab section.

Youth Co:Lab's approach combines capacity development, policy advocacy and ecosystem building. It has worked with governments to integrate youth entrepreneurship into national development strategies, partnered with private sector actors to unlock financing and mentorship, and collaborated with civil society to amplify youth voices. Through regional summits, national dialogues and innovation challenges, the initiative has created platforms for young people to co-create solutions and influence decision-making processes.

To mark its 10-year milestone, this report provides an evidence-based synthesis of Youth Co:Lab's contributions between 2017 and 2026 while reflecting on its evolution and milestones. For donors and investors, it documents the initiative's multiplier effects, return on investment through ecosystem leverage, and evidence of policy influence that outlasts individual Programme cycles. For policymakers, it surfaces replicable models of youth entrepreneurship governance drawn from across 30 countries and territories, including national strategies, cross-ministry coordination mechanisms, and ecosystem diagnostic framework adapted at country level. For ecosystem practitioners, it distils a decade of applied learning on what it takes to support young people — not just to enter the room, but to thrive and lead within it. It also aims to inform strategic positioning, resource mobilization and future programmeming by documenting systemic changes, highlighting stories of transformation and identifying lessons learned.

The scope of the report aligns with YEP-AP and its three streams of work: upstream policy and knowledge influence, midstream ecosystem capacity and partnerships, and downstream support for youth-led ventures. Gender equality and inclusion principles are mainstreamed throughout the analysis, shaping definitions, disaggregation and interpretation of findings. The report also provides foresight on emerging trends and priorities for 2026–2030 and beyond.

How to Use This Report

This report is designed to serve multiple audiences. Readers interested in policy evidence and replicable models will find the most relevant analysis in the Ecosystem Deep Dive and Evolution of Youth Co:Lab sections. Those focused on investment returns and Programme outcomes should start with the Executive Summary and Stories of Change. Practitioners and ecosystem builders will find actionable learning in Lessons Learned. The Looking Ahead section is addressed to all audiences and sets out the collective call to action for the decade ahead.

5. World Bank. (2026). Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15–24) [Data set]. World Bank Open Data.
6. TheGlobalEconomy.com. (2024). Youth unemployment in Asia. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/Youth_unemployment/Asia
7. ILO. (2017). ASEAN in Transformation – The Future of Jobs at Risk of Automation.
8. ILO. (2024). *Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2024*. ILO Publishing.
9. International Labour Organization & Asian Development Bank. (2020). *Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific*. ILO & ADB.

METHODOLOGY

The report applies a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis with qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive account of Youth Co:Lab's contributions over the past decade. Quantitative data were drawn from regional and country-level monitoring systems, while qualitative insights were generated through Most Significant Change (MSC) surveys and key informant interviews (KII). The qualitative evidence base includes 21 MSC survey responses across three streams, complemented by 10 in-depth interviews with youth-led ventures.

In addition, the analysis draws on a systematic review of Youth Co:Lab knowledge products and practitioner perspectives, including think pieces and blogs authored by youth entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and subject matter experts. This approach ensures that quantitative trends are triangulated with lived experiences, ecosystem insights, and system-level perspectives.

Analytical Framework

The methodology is grounded in systems thinking and examines results across three streams of work:

Upstream: Policy and knowledge influence

Midstream: Ecosystem capacity and partnerships

Downstream: Direct support for youth-led ventures

Design Features

Mixed-methods synthesis

Integration of quantitative data from monitoring systems with qualitative insights drawn from case studies, MSC surveys and interviews.

Participatory approach

Inclusion of diverse youth voices, partner perspectives and co-creation mechanisms to ensure representation and relevance across upstream, midstream, and downstream stakeholders.

Most Significant Change (MSC) surveys

MSC surveys were used to capture stakeholder-defined outcomes across the three streams of work. A total of 21 responses were collected, including eight youth entrepreneurs (downstream), eight ecosystem partners (midstream), and five government stakeholders (upstream). The MSC approach enabled the identification of outcome pathways and turning points that are not easily captured through quantitative indicators.[10]

Case study and interview methodology

Country and regional spotlights are complemented by 10 qualitative interviews with youth-led ventures, providing deeper insight into trajectories of change, enabling factors, and constraints.

Knowledge product review and AI-assisted synthesis

A systematic review of Youth Co:Lab reports, studies, and knowledge products was conducted to extract relevant findings and trends across thematic areas. Artificial intelligence tools were used to support content scanning, thematic coding, and pattern identification across large volumes of documentation. All AI-assisted outputs were validated and curated by the reporting team.

Practitioner and thought leadership analysis

The report incorporates insights from think pieces and blogs authored by youth entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and practitioners. These sources provide real-time reflections on ecosystem dynamics, financing, inclusion, and innovation trends, complementing primary data sources.

Triangulation

Verification of findings through multiple sources, including Programme records, MSC responses, interviews, knowledge products, and practitioner perspectives.

Digital tools

The analytical process was supported by a range of digital tools and platforms to enhance the reach, efficiency, and consistency of data collection and analysis across the region:

AI-assisted synthesis

Artificial intelligence tools were used to support content scanning, thematic coding, and pattern identification across large volumes of qualitative data, including knowledge products and MSC survey responses. All AI-assisted outputs were reviewed and validated by the reporting team.

Online surveys

Structured surveys, including the MSC surveys, were administered digitally to government stakeholders (upstream), ecosystem partners (midstream), and youth entrepreneurs (downstream), enabling participation across countries and time zones.

Online and hybrid interviews

Key informant interviews with youth-led ventures were conducted through digital platforms, allowing for engagement across diverse geographic and institutional contexts.

The use of digital tools expanded the reach and efficiency of data collection, while also introducing limitations related to digital access and connectivity, which are noted in the Limitations sub-section.

10. See Annex for survey instrument.

Key Learning Questions

The analysis is guided by four overarching questions:

1. What have been the most significant changes and outcomes over the past 10 years?
2. How have youth-led enterprises, innovations and partnerships contributed to systemic change?
3. What lessons can inform the next decade of empowerment for all young people?
4. How have cross-cutting issues—such as gender equality, inclusion, climate and digital transformation—been addressed through programmatic interventions?

Evidence Base

Data sources include:

- **Regional and country-level monitoring and evaluation systems.**
- **In-depth interviews with youth-led ventures**
- **National, regional and global reports, case studies and success stories published by Youth Co:Lab**
- **Youth Co:Lab knowledge products, including reports, studies, and diagnostics**
- **MSC survey responses across upstream, midstream, and downstream stakeholders**
- **Think pieces and blogs authored by youth entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and practitioners**
- **Youth Co:Lab 5-Year Evaluation**

Limitations

The analysis acknowledges several constraints and notes that this report does not replace a formal evaluation.

Data variability: Differences in data completeness and quality across countries. Systematic disaggregation of reach and outcomes by gender, disability, indigeneity, and other LNOB dimensions was not consistently collected across countries and Programme cycles. This remains a measurement priority for future programmeming.

Statistical significance: The number and method of selection of samples may not be considered statistically significant.

Attribution challenges: Outcomes in complex ecosystems often result from multiple actors; contribution analysis is used to establish plausible links.

Recall and non-response bias: Mitigated through triangulation and selective verification.

Safeguards: Ethical standards are applied, including informed consent and anonymization of sensitive data.

ECOSYSTEM DEEP DIVE

Over the last decade, the entrepreneurship story of Asia-Pacific has changed its architecture. In the mid-2010s, much of the region still looked like a patchwork: informal finance, urban startup enclaves, survivalist microbusinesses, and youth treated more as Programme beneficiaries than system-builders. By the mid-2020s, it looks more like a regional operating system—denser in capital, sharper in policy, more digital, more networked, and increasingly shaped by youth-led innovation, knowledge products, and cross-border collaboration. Asia now absorbs about 23 percent of global venture capital, reflecting a significant increase over the past two decades,[11] while Youth Co:Lab and partner networks have helped 390,000 young people unlock entrepreneurial opportunities across the region.

Yet the architecture of this transformation carries a structural fault line that numbers alone do not reveal. As Jonathan Wong and Elena Mayer-Besting observe, the core question of entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific is not only whether ecosystems exist, but who they are actually built for.

Venture capital flows remain concentrated among founders who share similar profiles—urban, formally educated, networked into elite professional circles. Women founders are more likely to be asked "prevention questions" about downside risk, while men are steered toward growth conversations. Entire sectors central to the region's social fabric (e.g., women's health, community care, rural livelihoods) remain underfunded because they fall outside the priorities of those who control capital allocation. The region's gains in ecosystem density have not yet closed these structural gaps.

The distance between a well-resourced founder and a first-generation entrepreneur from a secondary city or a rural community has not meaningfully narrowed. This is the contested terrain Youth Co:Lab operates in: not only helping young people enter the ecosystem, but questioning who the ecosystem was designed to serve.[12]

11. African Private Capital Association (AVCA). (2024). *Global Venture Capital: A Reprieve or a Recovery?*; World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). (2024). *Global Innovation Index data*. Asia accounts for approximately 23% of global venture capital investment (2024), up from low single-digit shares in earlier decades and reaching nearly 28% by 2023.
12. Wong, J. & Mayer-Besting, E. (2026). *The Future of Entrepreneurship Is a Question of Risk: Structures, gatekeeping, and who gets to build.* Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report.

THE THREE HORIZONS OF YOUTH-LED TRANSFORMATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC

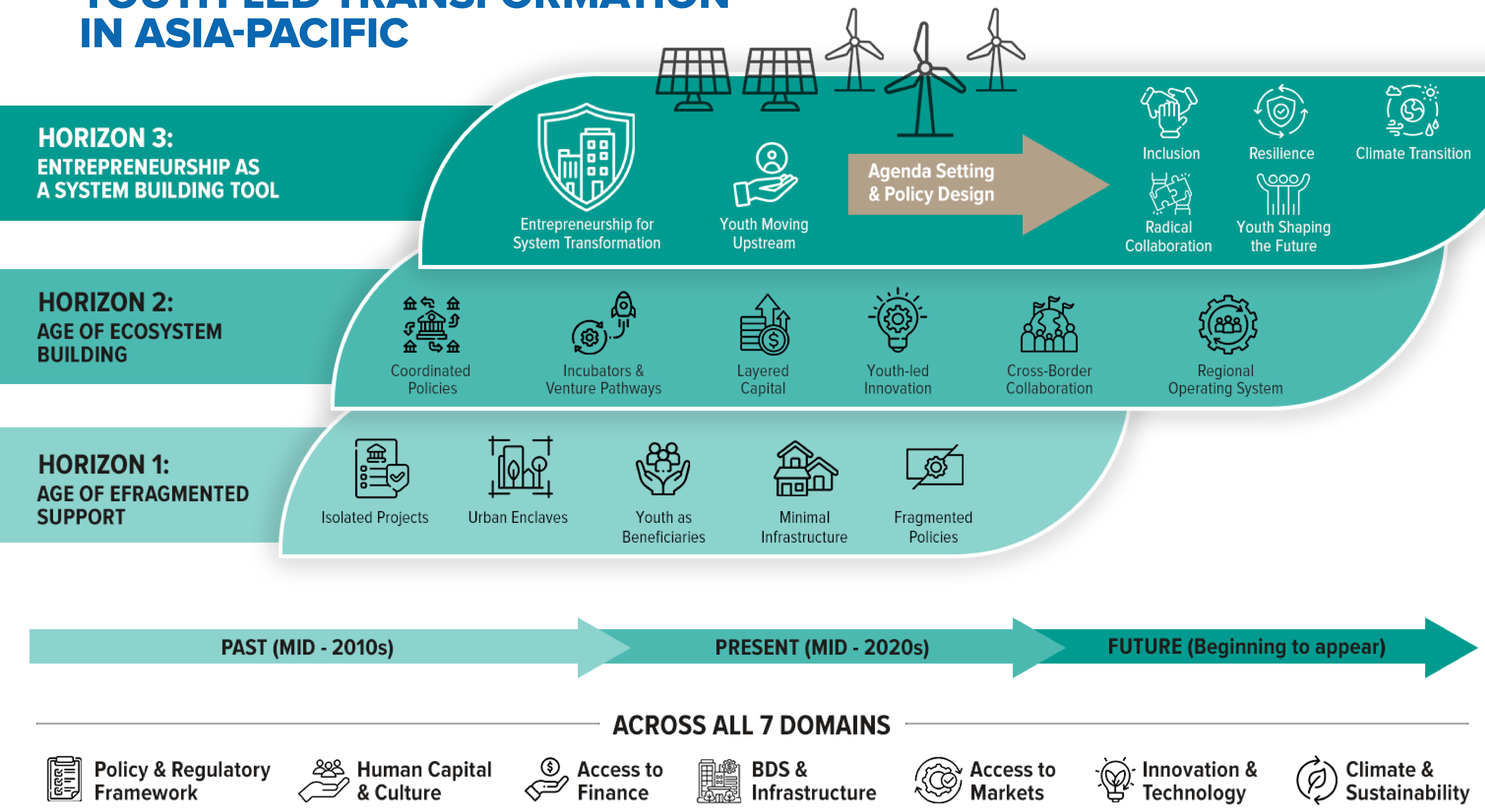

Image 3: Three Horizons of Youth-led Transformation in Asia-Pacific

As Kelvin Sergeant (ILO) highlights, these structural gaps are being further shaped by a period of overlapping disruptions. Geopolitical fragmentation, macroeconomic volatility, climate shocks, and labour market transformation are interacting simultaneously, exposing youth enterprises to higher risk while also creating space for more localized and adaptive innovation.[13]

A useful way to read this transformation is through three horizons. Horizon 1 was the age of fragmented support. Horizon 2—where the region sits now—is the age of ecosystem building. Horizon 3, which is beginning to appear, is more ambitious: entrepreneurship as a tool not only for growth, but for inclusion, resilience, and climate transition. Across all seven domains, the quiet revolution is that youth are increasingly moving upstream—closer to agenda-setting, policy design, and ecosystem shaping, not just participation at the end of the pipeline.

The seven domains below map onto Youth Co:Lab's three streams of work: upstream policy and regulatory changes reflect government-level shifts; business development support and ecosystem infrastructure reflect midstream transformation; and access to finance, markets, and human capital reflect the conditions that determine downstream outcomes for young entrepreneurs.

13. Sergeant, K. (2026). *Navigating Uncertainty: What Global Disruptions Mean for Youth Enterprises and Policy Priorities in Asia- Pacific.* Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report.

Policy and regulatory framework — *from permission to orchestration*

Government lens: the most strategic shift is from standalone youth projects to youth priorities being mainstreamed across trade, education, labour, and sector plans.

Ten years ago, youth entrepreneurship policy in many countries sat at the edges of youth policy, SME policy, or ICT policy. Today, governments are acting more like ecosystem orchestrators. Korea institutionalized a dedicated ministry for SMEs and startups in 2017; Viet Nam has layered student and startup support schemes into its policy architecture; and regional diagnostics are increasingly being used to identify where regulation, institutional overlap, and delivery failures are holding youth back.

The next frontier is not more policy volume, but better policy choreography: fewer overlaps, simpler procedures, stronger subnational delivery, and youth-responsive design that reaches beyond capital cities.

Access to finance and incentives — *from family capital to layered capital*

Partners lens: the region's financial evolution matters most when it helps "break down barriers" for underserved young entrepreneurs to thrive.

The money story has changed the fastest. Asia's share of global VC has roughly tripled over a decade; angel networks, crowdfunding platforms, public co-investment vehicles and fintech channels have widened the financing menu; and Korea's venture capital intensity now outperforms the global median. But the region's financial architecture is still incomplete. OECD notes that alternative finance remains uneven and underdeveloped across ASEAN, and ecosystems like Pakistan continue to struggle with the jump from seed to follow-on financing—the familiar "valley of death" between prototype and scale. The defining financial question of the next decade is whether Asia-Pacific can build serious capital for the missing middle: youth-led firms that are too ambitious for microfinance, too early for mainstream VC, and too intangible for collateral-based lending.

Four structural dynamics sharpen this picture.

First, the proximity-to-capital problem: the pipeline of youth entrepreneurs is richer than ever, but first-check capital (initial investment in early-stage ventures) still tracks urban elite networks far more than idea quality, a dynamic Pahrada Sapprasert (Orzon Ventures) identifies as the ecosystem's defining design flaw.[14]

Second, the missing middle gap: instruments structured for the transition from survival to scale, such as convertible grants, revenue-based financing, and pre-VC vehicles without collateral requirements, remain scarce.[15]

Third, gender exclusion is structural, not psychological: Wong and Mayer-Besting (ESCAP) argue it reflects who controls investment decisions and what sectors get deemed fundable; in South-East Asia, only 21 percent of femtech companies have secured external funding.[16] Fourth, data asymmetry as root cause: Dr. Faiz Shah (Yunus Center, AIT) identifies the absence of credit and impact data for informal and rural entrepreneurs as the bottleneck that systematically channels capital toward lower-risk tech sectors, regardless of investor appetite.[17]

Human capital and entrepreneurship culture — *from extracurricular to embedded*

A decade ago, entrepreneurship was often treated as an extracurricular curiosity. Now it is moving inside the system. Universities across the region have built incubators, challenge funds, and venture pathways; Bhutan has integrated entrepreneurship into schools; Korea and Singapore have normalized campus innovation; and Viet Nam's education-linked entrepreneurship reforms point toward a future where enterprise is taught as part of mainstream capability building. Yet culture still lags structure.

Across much of the region, youth continue to confront family risk aversion, fear of failure, and a strong pull toward "safe" careers. The enduring gap is not ambition, but translation: the distance between what schools teach and what founders actually need—commercial judgment, negotiation, customer discovery, and the stamina to build during uncertainty.

Business development support and infrastructure — *from training delivery to ecosystem enablement*

ESO lens: the frontier is no longer generic training; it is tailored accompaniment that meets founders at the grain of their real lives.

ESOs have matured from service providers into system builders. The strongest ones now convene, mentor, advocate, data-collect, broker partnerships, and translate abstract opportunity into founder-ready support. Impact Hub Phnom Penh, for example, works across the full entrepreneurship journey, from ideation and prototyping to market development and scaling. It has also embedded entrepreneurship learning through partnerships with universities and integrates climate and inclusion priorities across its Programmes.

This is the new maturity test for ESOs: not how many workshops they run, but how well they can respond to local realities—women with care burdens, migrants with legal barriers, founders with disabilities, rural entrepreneurs with weak logistics, or communities living far from capital-city Programmes. The next generation of support will be hybrid and place-based: digital mentoring, mobile clinics, provincial hubs, and bundled legal-finance-market guidance that follows the entrepreneur rather than expecting the entrepreneur to find the system.

Access to markets — *from local reach to hybrid reach*

Private-sector lens: the smartest partnerships now do more than write cheques—they open platforms, customers, procurement pilots and credibility.

Market access has shifted from being mostly local and physical to being increasingly hybrid—local, digital, regional, and sometimes global. During the pandemic, 87 percent of youth-led enterprises in Asia-Pacific pivoted their business strategies, while 92 percent implemented mobile or digital solutions. That pivot was not a temporary workaround; it became a structural reset. Young entrepreneurs now use online marketplaces, social commerce (selling directly through social media), cross-border digital branding and digital platform distribution to bypass some traditional bottlenecks.

But the market remains unequal. Logistics costs, compliance hurdles, visibility algorithms, procurement barriers and rural connectivity still determine who gets discovered, trusted and scaled. The next decade will reward ecosystems that move beyond "helping founders sell" to building youth-friendly procurement, trusted digital identities, and regional market entry pathways.

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14. Sapprasert, P. (Mameaw) (2026). *Financing What Matters: Backing the Next Generation of Founders*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. 500 TukTuks / Orzon Ventures, Thailand.
15. As above.
16. Wong, J. & Mayer-Besting, E. (2026). As previously cited. ESCAP (2025) cited therein on femtech funding; ff.co (2025) cited therein on female partner investment rates.
17. Shah, F. (2026). *Financing and Financial Inclusion: Accelerating Youth-Led Economies in Asia-Pacific*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. Yunus Center, Asian Institute of Technology.

Innovation and technology — *from digital access to digital advantage*

Ten years ago, technology entrepreneurship in much of Asia-Pacific was still niche and metro-centric. Today, the region is clearly part of the global innovation frontier. Asian Intellectual Property offices now account for around 70 percent of global patent, trademark and design filings, and Singapore's digital economy data show just how deep firm-level uptake can become, with 94.6 percent of firms implementing at least one digital area and 85 percent of SMEs adopting at least one sector-specific digital solution.

Yet a counter current remains strong: the digital divide is no longer only about internet access.

It is increasingly about who can access skills, data, AI tools, quality mentorship, and the institutional support that turns technology into productivity. The next divide in the region will not be between "online" and "offline," but between those who can use advanced tools to shape markets and those who remain stuck at the edge of digital adoption.

Climate and sustainability — *from awareness to redesign*

This is the newest and perhaps most consequential domain. Asia-Pacific remains the world's most climate-vulnerable region, with 13 of the 30 countries most vulnerable to climate impacts located here, yet it is also becoming a serious centre of green innovation. ILO estimates suggest that green and blue policy measures could create 8.4 million youth jobs globally by 2030, with close to 6 million of them in Asia and the Pacific. Meanwhile, SGX — Singapore Exchange made sustainability reporting mandatory for listed companies on a timeline beginning with financial years ending on or after 31 December 2017, signalling that sustainability is moving from brand language into market discipline. The climate turn in entrepreneurship is therefore not cosmetic. It marks a deeper transition: entrepreneurship is being asked to help societies decarbonize, adapt, and redesign livelihoods at the same time.

And this is where youth-led innovation becomes especially powerful. The strongest climate signals coming out of the region are not only about awareness, but about radical collaboration across public systems, communities, ESOs, and private actors. WHECAT in China turns waste straw into biodegradable cat nests while creating income opportunities for low-income villagers, rural women, and people with disabilities. GAWIREA in Indonesia combines renewable energy, sago processing and waste transformation to improve productivity and resilience for indigenous rural women. Across the wider region, UNDP and partner materials increasingly frame climate, digital transition and inclusion as linked—not separate—agendas. The emerging Horizon 3 story is clear: climate entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific will not be a niche sector. It will become a design principle that cuts across agriculture, logistics, oceans, energy, housing, and livelihoods.

Seen through thematic lenses, the region's last decade looks even sharper: economic empowerment is moving from jobs-as-placement to jobs-as-creation; digitalization from tools to business models; civic engagement from consultation to co-creation; inclusion from generic access to tailored ecosystems; and climate action from advocacy to invention. Qrafft opens wider markets for artisans through e-commerce; WHECAT makes circularity tangible; Titang turns legal complexity into civic access for stateless communities; and Mekong Inclusive Ventures is helping build an inclusive impact finance ecosystem around entrepreneurs with disabilities. These are not marginal stories. They are early signals of where the region is heading.

Asia-Pacific has spent the last decade building the scaffolding of a youth entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The next decade will decide whether that scaffolding becomes a truly inclusive, climate-resilient engine of regional transformation—or remains a high-growth system that still leaves too many young people at the margins.

EVOLUTION OF YOUTH CO:LAB:
A MOVEMENT SHAPED BY PEOPLE, PURPOSE, AND POSSIBILITY

A MOVEMENT MEETS A MOMENT

The origins of Youth Co:Lab can be traced back to a pivotal global shift. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 created a shared ambition to "leave no one behind," (LNOB) while regional and global analyses, including UNDP's Human Development Report on Demographic Transitions (2016), the UN's Switched On report, and the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNCTAD's Policy Guide on Youth Entrepreneurship, highlighted a critical insight: young people were not only beneficiaries of development, but essential drivers of it.

Yet, despite this recognition, pathways for meaningful youth engagement remained limited. Innovation and entrepreneurship were emerging as promising avenues, but efforts were fragmented, often short-term, and lacked systemic support.

Youth Co:Lab was born out of this convergence—a moment meeting a movement. It was not designed as a traditional Programme, but as a response to a question:

How do we meaningfully engage young people to accelerate the SDGs at scale?

From the outset, its evolution was shaped not only by shifting development priorities, but by the people who curated, challenged, and expanded its vision, from youth innovators and ecosystem builders to policymakers and partners.

PHASE I:
CURATION AND EARLY EXPANSION
(2017–2019)

Youth Co:Lab formally emerged in 2017 through a partnership between UNDP and Citi Foundation, initially as a pilot across few countries in Asia and the Pacific. The brand "Youth Co:Lab" was developed based on extensive consultation with young innovators and ecosystem partners from over 10 countries during a period of three months in 2017 and various youth personas of young leaders were used in the process.

At the time, many countries were already hosting "hackathons" and innovation challenges. However, three critical gaps were evident:

- **Lack of sustained support** beyond ideation stages
- **Fragmented ecosystems** with actors working in silos
- **Limited policy guidance** despite strong government interest

Youth Co:Lab was designed to address these gaps through a three-tiered approach:

Upstream: policy engagement and evidence generation

Midstream: ecosystem strengthening and partnerships

Downstream: direct support to youth-led startups

During this phase, the initiative focused on innovation challenges, ideation, and capacity building both at the national and regional levels, complemented by regional summits that brought together governments, ecosystem actors, and young innovators as a community of practice. Equally important was the emphasis on learning and evidence. Early research on entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and youth engagement helped shape both Programme design and regional discourse.

As Youth Co:Lab expanded to over ten countries across East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific, its identity began to take shape not just as a set of activities, but as a platform for connection, learning, and co-creation.

Photo (right): Yibin from Citi in YCL Summit 2019 Viet Nam

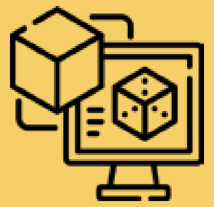
PHASE II:
EXPANSION, ADAPTATION, AND DEEPENING IMPACT
(2020–2022)

The second phase marked a period of rapid expansion and transformation, shaped in part by the global disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Geographically, Youth Co:Lab grew to nearly 30 countries, significantly expanding its reach. At the same time, its programmematic offer became more structured and differentiated, reflecting the diverse needs of youth and ecosystem actors:

- Springboard Programmes provided tailored support to startups, including thematic tracks such as climate and advanced acceleration;
- Springboard Amplifier strengthened the capacity of ecosystem partners, particularly Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs); and
- Targeted inclusion initiatives supported marginalized groups, including young women, persons with disabilities, indigenous youth, LGBTIQ+ communities, and youth on the move.

A defining feature of this phase was the rapid digital transformation of Youth Co:Lab. What began as predominantly in-person engagement evolved into a hybrid and digital ecosystem, including:

Online learning platforms and learning management systems



Virtual innovation challenges and accelerator Programmes

Regional and global hybrid summits

This shift not only ensured continuity during the pandemic but also expanded access and scale, enabling Youth Co:Lab to reach broader and more diverse communities across the region. At the same time, the initiative deepened its commitment to leaving no one behind, embedding inclusion, digitalization, and climate action more systematically into its design and delivery.

18. Concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity vary greatly across the region and globally. There is a long history of culturally specific and Indigenous gender identities in the Asia and the Pacific region. This report uses an acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize and reflect the other sexual orientations and gender identities not encompassed in the short acronym. It is an umbrella term that is often used to refer to the community as a whole.

PHASE III:
CONSOLIDATION, LOCALIZATION, AND SYSTEMIC INTEGRATION
(2023–2026)

In its current phase, Youth Co:Lab has focused on sustainability, local ownership, and systems integration. With several years of experience and a growing body of evidence, the initiative has increasingly shifted from direct delivery to enabling ecosystems to lead. This includes:

- Strengthening alumni networks, with youth entrepreneurs taking on mentorship and leadership roles within their communities
- Expanding support to ecosystem actors, including incubators, accelerators, and academic institutions
- Supporting government-led ecosystem diagnostics and national Programmes, enabling countries to design context-specific strategies and interventions

This phase also reflects a deeper understanding that sustainable impact requires institutionalization as well as embedding youth interventions across UNDP's portfolios. As a result, many countries including China, Viet Nam and Indonesia have begun to adopt and adapt Youth Co:Lab approaches into their own national Programmes, supported by local partnerships and resources. At the regional level, Youth Co:Lab has contributed to the creation of a broader youth development portfolio, extending its principles into thematic areas such as climate action, digital transformation, and civic engagement.

Parallel initiatives, such as the Movers Programme, have further expanded reach through peer-to-peer learning models, engaging hundreds of thousands of young people and reinforcing the idea that youth are not just participants, but co-creators of change.

MOVERS PROGRAMME

Since 2019, the Movers Programme has grown into a regional community of young leaders and facilitators dedicated to advancing SDGs awareness, digital literacy, soft skills, global citizenship, and inclusion among youth. Through a training-of-trainers, peer-to-peer learning, and action-focused approach, it aims to empower young people across Asia-Pacific to take action for the SDGs and create lasting impact in their communities. By partnering with universities, schools, youth networks, and other ecosystem partners, Movers Programme integrates skills development into both formal and informal education with the objective to reach mass youth groups, especially underserved communities.

In April 2019, it was the first time for the group of youth volunteers of the Youth Co:Lab Summit in Hanoi to be exposed to impact entrepreneurship activities. With most entrepreneurship-related programmes in the region focusing on founders, with a specific timeline, location or phase of maturity, the youth volunteers did not know how to continue engaging in similar activities. This asked us a question, aligned with Youth Co:Lab's Phase II to expand its access and scale: how might we lower the barrier to entry of entrepreneurship programmes, so that more young people learn about impact entrepreneurship?

The Movers Programme was then born to raise awareness about impact entrepreneurship within mass youth groups, serving youth who were not ready yet to become entrepreneurs and youth who saw themselves working in the broader entrepreneurship ecosystem, not as a founder.

The Movers Programme was implemented by supporting youth to organize their own workshops from a standard learning material, the "Movers Workshop: Orientation to Entrepreneurship", co-developed with the International Labour Organization. This Movers Workshop was designed for all youth, with no required experience, to be able to attend and replicate it through a training-of-trainers approach. It combines presentations of entrepreneurship frameworks, examples of youth entrepreneurs, case studies and group discussions for participants to reflect on their entrepreneurship readiness and preferred role in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The Movers Workshops were first organized during national Youth Co:Lab programmes, allowing to expand entrepreneurship awareness to the general youth population and in some cases, creating a pipeline to the Springboard Programme, as shared by Maira Shaikh Qureshi: "I came into this journey as a youth volunteer with ideas. I am leaving this chapter as a confident social entrepreneur."

Over the years, the Movers Programme evolved thanks to the ongoing feedback of the youth communities and partners by:

Positioning the entrepreneurial mindset as an essential skill for youth, rather than the primary focus;

Creating a wide range of learning materials, beyond entrepreneurship, for young people to develop the skills they need to take action for the SDGs and enhance their employability, in partnership with industry experts;

Growing a supportive community to foster peer-to-peer learning and provide a platform to amplify youth voices and lived experiences;

Creating long-term pathways connected to the youth development portfolios across countries and programmes, empowering young people to become entrepreneurs through Youth Co:Lab programmes, or scale their impact through other programmes;

Collaborating with youth networks, educational institutions, governments to embed the Movers learning materials and methodology in ongoing curriculums and programmes beyond UNDP's.

A MOVEMENT SHAPED BY PEOPLE

Across all three phases, a defining characteristic of Youth Co:Lab's evolution has been its human-centred nature. The initiative did not follow a fixed blueprint. Instead, it evolved through continuous interaction with:

- Young people who challenged assumptions and redefined priorities
- Governments that sought practical pathways to engage youth
- Ecosystem partners who brought local knowledge and innovation
- Practitioners and teams who adapted, experimented, and learned in real time

In this sense, Youth Co:Lab grew not only as a platform, but as a collective journey. Each phase reflects not just strategic shifts, but changes in mindset, moving from experimentation to integration, from support to co-ownership, and from Programmes to movement-building.

Viewed through frameworks that track the quality of youth engagement over time, this trajectory is significant. Hart's Ladder of Participation maps engagement from tokenism and decoration at its lower rungs to youth-initiated and youth-led action at its upper rungs. Youth Co:Lab's evolution broadly mirrors an upward climb along this spectrum, moving from early phases where young people were primarily participants in challenges designed by adults, toward a model in which youth co-design Programmes, advise on strategy, and lead peer ecosystems. It became a youth-led initiative, shifting the positioning of youth programmeming within UNDP and leveraging on the human capital that the young team members brought with them. This shift is also reflected in the UN's own Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE) framework, which distinguishes between youth as recipients of support and youth as genuine partners in decision-making. Across all three phases, Youth Co:Lab has progressively moved toward the latter, not uniformly or without friction, but as a clear directional commitment.

FROM EVOLUTION TO TRANSFORMATION

Over the past decade, Youth Co:Lab has evolved from a pilot initiative into a regional platform influencing policies, ecosystems, and individual lives. This evolution has been marked by:

- **Increasing scale—from a few pilot countries to a regional presence**
- **Greater depth—from isolated activities to integrated ecosystem approaches**
- **Stronger ownership—from externally driven Programmes to locally sustained initiatives**

At its core, however, the most significant transformation lies in how youth are positioned: not as beneficiaries, but as leaders, innovators, and partners in development.

As the initiative transitions into its next phase, this dual evolution—of systems and people—offers a powerful foundation for scaling impact even further.

STORIES OF CHANGE

Since its launch in 2017, Youth Co:Lab has grown from a bold idea into a region-wide movement that is transforming Asia-Pacific's youth entrepreneurship landscape. In collaboration with partners, Youth Co:Lab has operated in over 30 countries and territories, reaching nearly 400,000 youth and stakeholders through national dialogues, regional summits, and social innovation challenges. This expansive engagement has empowered a new generation of changemakers including more than 48,000 young aspiring and established entrepreneurs and has helped launch or strengthen 4,000 youth-led social enterprises in communities across the region. As both a strategy and an outcome, Youth Co:Lab has built a robust ecosystem of support around youth innovation, forging and engaging 700+ partnerships with key stakeholders including government agencies, private sector companies, investors, and NGOs, creating a Youth Empowerment Alliance that champions youth-led solutions at systemic levels. Critically, over 100 Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) have also been trained and mobilized, ensuring that local incubators, accelerators, and networks are better equipped to provide inclusive support to young entrepreneurs. At the upstream level, Youth Co:Lab has also contributed to shaping evidence-based policies and strategies through its Strategic Intelligence Hub (SIH), strengthening the integration of youth entrepreneurship into national and regional development frameworks.

This systems approach has changed the scale and opportunity available to young social entrepreneurs (YSE). Youth are no longer working in isolation but are backed by a regional platform that operates at upstream policy, midstream institutional, and downstream grassroots levels to amplify their impact. These outcomes signal a positive trend in how youth entrepreneurship is being supported in the region, suggesting greater societal emphasis on empowering young problem-solvers.

Beyond Youth Co:Lab's strength in numbers, the initiative has enabled a mosaic of stories of change that illustrates how youth-led innovation is driving systems change in Asia-Pacific. Through these narratives, a clear pattern emerges:

The most meaningful and sustainable changes often occur when upstream, midstream, and downstream efforts intersect.

The cases below are organized by primary actor — government, ESO, and youth entrepreneur — and by the stream where change is most visible. In practice, the most durable outcomes occur where all three streams intersect, and each case illustrates those connections.

UPSTREAM
GOVERNMENT & POLICY

From Pilots to Policies.

Government partners who participated in the survey identified systemic or institutional changes as the most significant outcomes of their engagement with Youth Co:Lab. Rather than one-off project results, officials pointed to new strategies, partnerships, or budget allocations that outlast the Programme. In Indonesia for example, Imam Gunawan, Principal Policy Analyst at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, noted that Youth Co:Lab's "ecosystem approach" was adopted and delivered through other ministries, leading to a national youth entrepreneurship strategy with even provincial governments taking up YCL-inspired policies. In China, YCL convened a multi-stakeholder partnership (UNDP, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, China Soong Ching Ling Science & Culture Centre for Young People, UN Volunteers, etc.) that operated for seven years and established a replicable national framework for youth social innovation. And in Sri Lanka, Youth Co:Lab driven capacity building Programmes and future-fit curricula, including modules of gender and sexuality, critical media literacy, and future of work, were integrated into a national life-skills Programme, systematically upgrading how trainers and officials equip youth, according to the National Youth Corps - Sri Lanka . These examples underscore an upstream pattern: Youth Co:Lab provided governments with working models – for youth entrepreneurship, cross-sector coordination, inclusive curricula – which were then scaled or institutionalized by those governments.[19] In the words of an independent evaluation[20], YCL's greatest policy impact has been as a "*capacity to replicate*," giving governments proven approaches they could expand on their own. Across countries, the result is new or improved mechanisms (strategies, funds, councils) that embed youth voices and solutions into governance structures for the long term.

A synthesis of government survey responses across Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, China, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, prepared for this report, reinforces this upstream pattern while surfacing where the architecture is still incomplete. Ministries that once catalogued discrete training schemes now describe coordinated architecture spanning ministries, provinces, universities, civil society and private capital, a shift in institutional self-understanding that reflects a decade of sustained engagement. China's almost seven-year, five-party partnership with China Soong Ching Ling Foundation (SCLF), China Soong Ching Ling Science & Culture Centre for Young People (SCLSCC), UNV, and China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE) stands as particularly instructive evidence that durable partnerships, not repeated pilots, produce institutional change capable of surviving political cycles and staff turnover. Yet the synthesis also identifies a governance actor that remains consistently absent across ecosystems. Without the media, youth-led stories stay fragmented and political visibility remains uneven.[21]

The data behind these shifts are beginning to carry real policy weight. In Pakistan, the impact evaluation of the Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, supported through Youth Co:Lab's Strategic Intelligence Hub (SIH), quantified an average employment multiplier of 3.13 jobs per enterprise supported, rising to 14.9 jobs under the Tier-3 loan ceiling. Those figures reframed youth finance as an industrial strategy rather than a welfare spending, drawing the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, the State Bank of Pakistan and the Commonwealth Secretariat into tighter alignment. In the Republic of Korea, regional benchmarking surfaced a structural gap that strong aggregate performance had obscured, namely a robust startup ecosystem with limited influence of youth perspectives on formal policy processes and barriers to participation for some socially marginalised youth.

Across the evidence, several interconnected governance gaps emerge that continue to limit the depth and durability of ecosystem transformation. First, while coordination across ministries and actors has improved, many systems remain fragmented. Second, ecosystem gains are often built on short-term initiatives rather than fully institutionalised structures capable of withstanding political and funding shifts. Third, critical actors, particularly the media, remain under-integrated, limiting visibility and narrative cohesion. Across the region, a fourth governance gap is now openly named. Youth voice remains programmematic rather than statutory, and even the governments doing this most seriously acknowledge that young people rarely reach the rooms where budgets, regulations and financing decisions are made.[22] Together, these gaps highlight that while ecosystem activity has expanded, the governance foundations required to sustain and scale these gains remain uneven.

19. UNDP (2023). *MSC Survey – Government (Upstream) Respondents*. Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact dataset.
20. UNDP (2022). *Youth Co:Lab 5-Year Report* (2017–2021).
21. UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (2026). *From Delivery to Stewardship: What Ten Years of Youth Co:Lab Asks of Governments in Asia-Pacific*. Synthesis of government survey responses collected for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report.
22. As above

MIDSTREAM
ECOSYSTEM & ESOS

Institutions Transforming.

Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs) reported that their involvement with Youth Co:Lab led to fundamental shifts in how they operate and collaborate. In fact, all ESO respondents of MSC survey described a structural or cultural change within their organizations as their top outcome. Common themes include:

- **Expanded regional networks (breaking out of local silos)**
- **Stronger action-orientation in Programmes**
- **A deliberate inclusion focus**
- **Viewing themselves as part of a larger platform rather than stand-alone service providers.**

For instance, Impact Hub Phnom Penh (Cambodia) cited the Springboard Amplifier as a turning point that connected them to dozens of ESOs across Asia-Pacific, fundamentally changing their mindset from a purely local incubator to a regional ecosystem builder. Meanwhile in Indonesia, the NGO PLUS reported that Youth Co:Lab's support helped them mainstream a gender and a rural inclusion lens into their national Programmes, which they hadn't done before. The midstream takeaway is that capacity-building of ecosystem enablers has multiplier effects: after YCL, an ESO can better serve dozens of startups, attract new partners, and even advise government or academia. In 2023, UEH Institute, an ESO in Viet Nam credited YCL's influence for their decision to integrate social innovation into the university's curriculum and strategy, rather than treating such initiative as a one-time project. Such changes suggest that Youth Co:Lab has helped cultivate a culture of collaboration and inclusion among Asia-Pacific's entrepreneurship enablers, a legacy that strengthens the system far beyond individual cohorts.

Two contributions from practitioners closest to this work add texture to what ESO transformation looks like from the inside. Melanie Mossard (Impact Hub Asia-Pacific) offers the gardener as the defining metaphor, describing ESOs as actors who have quietly cultivated the soil and nurtured early growth long before ecosystems were visible, and who continue to serve as first believers in founders that traditional institutions routinely overlook.

Yet despite their centrality, ESOs remain what Mossard calls invisible infrastructure, underfunded, project-dependent, and rarely treated as the core ecosystem actors they have become. Financing is typically fragmented and short-term, limiting their ability to retain talent and invest in their own capacity.[23] Abdul Shakoor (CurveUp, Sri Lanka) sharpens a related point, noting that ecosystem support remains disproportionately concentrated in cities even as the most acute pressures of climate change, livelihoods and migration are playing out in rural areas. The actors best positioned to build inclusive, locally grounded ecosystems are precisely the ones with the least structural support.[24]

23. Mossard, M. (2026). *ESOs as Gardeners of Emerging Ecosystems.* Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. Impact Hub Asia-Pacific.
24. Shakoor, A. (2026). *Transnational Market Exposure: Redefining Resilience for Marginalized Youth*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. CurveUp, Sri Lanka.

DOWNSTREAM
YSES & COMMUNITIES

Personal Transformation Driving Impact.

At the individual level, thousands of young social entrepreneurs (YSEs) have directly engaged with Youth Co:Lab. Aggregated analysis of Most Significant Change (MSC) survey responses across downstream respondents reveals a consistent pattern. The changes YSEs identify as most significant are not primarily financial or operational, but relational and dispositional. Across cohorts and countries, the most frequently cited outcomes are gains in confidence and self-efficacy, expansion of networks and peer relationships, and a sharper sense of purpose and direction. Revenue growth, capital raised and user numbers appear in the data, but are rarely described as the turning point. What respondents consistently identify as foundational is the personal shift that made everything else possible.

Maira's journey offers one of the clearest documented examples of the Movers Programme functioning as a genuine feeder into the YSE pathway. Entering through a Movers workshop and progressing through five successive cohorts, from a Movers workshop participant to a Green Jobs Fellow to a Springboard participant to a YECAP Shakers participant and then a facilitator and a founder of her own venture, her trajectory provides concrete evidence for a pattern that the 5-Year Evaluation identified as an assumption worth testing.[25] Where that earlier evaluation could only point to the pipeline as a likely mechanism, Maira's end-to-end progression names it as a reality. This reinforces a broader finding from downstream data that the most significant changes for YSEs are cumulative, built through sustained engagement rather than a single Programme moment.[26]

Furthermore, survey data show that the majority of YSEs trace their entrepreneurial journey to a specific moment of validation or belonging enabled through Youth Co:Lab, whether through a mentor relationship, a cohort peer dynamic, or the experience of being taken seriously by an institutional actor for the first time. For many, particularly those navigating multiple layers of exclusion, this is not a soft precondition to impact. It is the impact, from which enterprises activity then follow.[27]

These upstream, midstream, and downstream changes are, of course, interconnected. For instance, a government adopting a youth entrepreneurship strategy (upstream) creates more funding opportunities for ESOs and startups (midstream, downstream); conversely, successful youth ventures and ESO models give governments the confidence to enact supportive policies. Indeed, many of the achievements mentioned above involved intersections of change (e.g., youth innovation influencing policy, or ecosystem partnerships enabling youth to scale solutions). The following Stories of Change illustrate these intersections. Each case highlights a different primary actor – government, ESO, or youth entrepreneur – to show how change at one level catalyses change at others.

25. UNDP (2023). MSC Survey — YSE (Downstream) Respondents. Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact dataset.
26. As above
27. As above

INDONESIA

FROM NATIONAL DIALOGUE TO NATIONAL POLICY

Actor: Government Champion (Ministry of Youth and Sports) – Indonesia

Level of Change: Systemic (Policy Reform)

Streams: Upstream (policy), with feedback from Midstream networks

Themes: Governance & Social Inclusion

Photo credits: Eva Pastora/UNDP Indonesia

In 2019, at the Youth Co:Lab National Dialogue in Jakarta, senior officials witnessed something new. Youth entrepreneurs from across Indonesia pitching solutions for community challenges – from plastic waste upcycling to rural fintech. This exposure planted a seed in the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Over the next year, UNDP contributed to the Ministry-led development of Indonesia's first National Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (2020–2024). According to the Ministry's own MSC survey response, "the Youth Co:Lab ecosystem approach was scaled to other ministries and delivered a national strategy; several provinces even adopted YCL policy recommendations".[28] Indeed, the final strategy did more than acknowledge youth innovation. It committed government funding (roughly IDR 50 billion over 3 years) to youth startup grants and urged each province to set up a youth entrepreneurship programme. By 2022, provinces like West Java and Aceh had launched Youth Co:Lab-inspired youth innovation funds, effectively localizing the policy.

What's notable is how this policy came to life. Youth Co:Lab had convened a broad network (young entrepreneurs, ESOs like PLUS Indonesia, academia, etc.) whose inputs were channelled into the strategy drafting. This meant the policy wasn't devised in isolation. It drew directly on on-the-ground successes and failures.

Another upstream result is institutional. Multi-stakeholder coordination on youth enterprise is now formalized through a task force that includes the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, and key ecosystem players (some of whom first met through YCL events).

The Ministry representative's reflection notes **"strengthened collaboration and standardized youth participation in sustainable development planning" as a key outcome.**[29]

In short, Youth Co:Lab helped Indonesia go from ad-hoc dialogues to a whole-of-government framework for youth entrepreneurship, illustrating how strategic upstream engagement can translate youth innovation into enduring public policy.

28. UNDP (2023). *MSC Survey – Government (Upstream) Respondents*. Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact dataset.

29. UNDP (2023). *MSC Survey – Government "Reflect on Impact" Responses*.

IMPACT HUB PHNOM PENH

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE STARTUP NETWORK

Actor: Entrepreneur Support Organization (ESO) – Cambodia & Regional

Level of Change: Institutional & Network (ESO practice, regional norms)

Streams: Midstream (capacity/network), with Downstream effects

Themes: Governance & Social Inclusion (inclusive entrepreneurship)

Photo credits: Impact Hub Phnom Penh

As one of Cambodia's leading incubators, Impact Hub Phnom Penh (IHPP) has supported a growing pipeline of startups and social enterprises across the country, reaching all 24 provinces and engaging more than 17,000 young people through more than 380 Programmes. Over the years, its work has helped nurture early-stage ideas, build entrepreneurial skills, and connect founders to opportunities, making it a central actor in Cambodia's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

IHPP identified exposure to regional peers and practices as the most meaningful change associated with Youth Co:Lab. Participation, and later leadership, in Youth Co:Lab convenings, particularly the Springboard Amplifier, enabled the team to engage with ecosystem actors from other countries, exchange experiences, and reflect on how inclusive entrepreneurship is being approached across diverse contexts. These interactions created space for practical learning, allowing IHPP to see how similar challenges are being addressed elsewhere and how different Programme approaches are adapted to local realities. This peer learning was particularly valuable for a smaller ecosystem like Cambodia, where access to regional networks and comparative insights can otherwise be limited.

Rather than attributing change to a single Programme or tool, IHPP emphasized the value of being part of a wider regional community of practice. Through ongoing exchanges with other ecosystem support organisations, the team gained new perspectives and strengthened its ability to situate its work within broader regional trends. This engagement helped reinforce IHPP's confidence in its approach and enhanced its credibility as an ecosystem actor, both domestically and in regional platforms where collaboration and knowledge sharing are increasingly important.

IHPP's story highlights a form of impact that is less visible but important to long-term ecosystem development. Regional platforms like Youth Co:Lab create value not only through direct support, but by strengthening the connections between organisations that shape the ecosystem. For IHPP, these connections provided access to ideas, relationships, and shared experiences that continue to inform its work. In this way, the organisation's contribution reflects how stronger networks and continuous learning can support more cohesive and resilient entrepreneurship ecosystems over time.

Over the years, its work has helped nurture early-stage ideas, build entrepreneurial skills, and connect founders to opportunities, making it a central actor in Cambodia's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

M.J ECOSPIN INNOVATIONS

FROM VOLUNTEER TO ECOSYSTEM BUILDER

Photo credits: M.J EcoSpin Innovations

Actor: Young Social Entrepreneur (YSE) — Engr. Maira Shaikh Qureshi, Founder of M.J EcoSpin Innovations — Pakistan

Level of Change: Personal Transformation Driving Venture Creation (confidence, skills, and leadership enabling entrepreneurship)

Streams: Downstream (individual growth, enterprise development)

Themes: Green Social Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Engr. Maira Shaikh Qureshi did not start out as a startup founder. She started as a young woman in Pakistan who was passionate about sustainability; but, by her own account, lacked the confidence to act on it publicly. Public speaking felt out of reach. Facilitation was something other people did. Through the Movers Programme, that changed. The workshop experience transformed her communication and leadership skills, and she became a certified speaker and facilitator. Within six months, she had become the first to be recognized as the Fastest Movers Envoy under the Programme, a milestone she traces directly to the network of changemakers, mentors, and young leaders across the Asia-Pacific that Youth Co:Lab placed within her reach.[30]

What followed was a five-cohort journey. Movers empowered her as a leader and facilitator. The Green Jobs Fellowship deepened her green skills and understanding of circular economy solutions. Springboard sharpened her entrepreneurial thinking. YECAP Shakers[31] connected climate action to social impact, and eventually repositioned her as a facilitator and a co-designer for younger cohorts; not only a participant, but a part of the ecosystem itself. Out of this progression grew M.J EcoSpin Innovations, a venture focused on sustainable textile recycling and circular economy solutions. Her work earned recognition from the UNOPS Pakistan Green Solutions Challenge, #Movers4GreenJobs, and a YECAP Shakers grant for youth-led climate action and social innovation.[32]

Her trajectory also illustrates a pattern that Youth Co:Lab's downstream data confirms more broadly. Personal transformation is not a "soft", intangible outcome. It is the enabling condition for everything that follows, the venture, the recognition, and the community impact.

Maira's story is notable not for a single breakthrough, but for its arc. She describes her journey as moving **"from a youth volunteer with ideas to a confident social entrepreneur,"** a shift she attributes to the consistency of support across Programmes over time.

That long arc, rare in development programmeming, is what made the difference.

30. UNDP (2023). *MSC Survey – YSE (Downstream) Respondents.*
31. The YECAP Shakers Programme is a building Programme for youth climate leaders in Asia and the Pacific. The fellowship provides capacity-building on community mobilization, resource mobilization, team building, communications, Leaving No One Behind, and gender equality, fosters collaborative networks among civil society organizations (CSOs), and equips CSOs leaders with tools and resources to expand their climate advocacy
32. As above..

GAWIREA

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN THROUGH CLEAN ENERGY

Actor: Young Social Entrepreneur (YSE) – Andi Rosita Dewi, Papua (Indonesia)

Level of Change: Community & Institutional Ripple (women's livelihoods, local partnerships)

Streams: Downstream (enterprise)

Themes: Climate Action (and Social Inclusion)

Photo credits: GAWIREA

In the remote South Papua of Indonesia, reliable electricity and jobs are both scarce, especially for indigenous women. Recognizing this, Andi Rosita Dewi, a renewable energy engineer founded Girls and Women in Renewable Energy Academy (GAWIREA) in 2021. Her idea was to train local women farmers to harness solar power for processing their crops (primarily sago palm) more efficiently, thereby improving incomes and environmental outcomes. Initiated as a small community project, GAWIREA gained momentum when Andi participated in the Youth Co:Lab Bootcamp 2022 in Jakarta, winning the pitching session and enabling her participation to the Regional Springboard Elevate 2023 fellowship, a track designed for young innovators from underrepresented groups. Through Elevate's mentorship and a micro-grant, Andi expanded GAWIREA's "Solar Sisters" training programme to three villages and set up a solar-powered sago processing lab in Samo village. By 2025, the project had trained over 150 indigenous women and 1,000 youth across Southeast Asia in solar tech and value-added processing. Women like Christina, once a subsistence farmer in Papua, now run community solar dryers that quadruple their sago flour output, and GAWIREA buys the surplus for sale in urban markets, creating a stable income stream. Andi reported a 30-40% income boost for the participating women in 2022[33].

GAWIREA's impact is two-fold: economic empowerment and environmental innovation at the community level. But it's also influencing the ecosystem beyond that. Seeing its success, the provincial government's Energy Office signed an MoU with GAWIREA in 2024 to replicate the model in two other districts, providing land and co-funding for new solar labs (internal MoU, Papua ESDM, 2024).[34] Andi has effectively become an ecosystem builder for her region. She now advises a local polytechnic college on incorporating renewable energy in their curriculum, and sits on a multi-stakeholder council on indigenous women's economic inclusion, ensuring that policy dialogues include grassroots women's voices.

This story underscores that a downstream intervention by one passionate youth can trigger midstream and upstream ripples. Andi's success is changing attitudes among local officials (who now view young indigenous women as partners in development) and inspiring other community-based entrepreneurs in Papua. It exemplifies climate action and inclusion working hand-in-hand, driven by a young innovators' leadership.

Youth Co:Lab's role was catalytic but non-prescriptive. **It gave GAWIREA a platform, and the venture organically evolved into a community.**

By 2025, GAWIREA has improved access to clean energy for over 200 households and influenced a local bylaw to subsidize solar equipment for women's cooperatives (pending provincial legislature approval).

33. UNDP (2024). *From Margins to Mainstream: Inclusive Youth Entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific*. p.192-193.

34. Papua Province Energy Office & GAWIREA (2024). *Memorandum of Understanding (Indonesian).*

BRIDGING POLICY AND TECHNOLOGY

AI4GOV REVOLUTIONIZES PUBLIC SERVICENATIONAL POLICY

Actor: Young Tech Innovators (YSE) – Lei Motilla and team, Founders of AI4GOV – Philippines

Level of Change: Systemic (E-Governance Innovation)

Streams: Downstream (youth startup), Upstream (government adoption)

Themes: Digital Transformation (with Governance)

Photo credits: AI4GOV

In late 2018, a group of Filipino data scientists and tech enthusiasts came together to tackle a persistent problem: making government services more user-friendly. They founded AI4GOV, a civic-tech startup offering AI and automation solutions to public agencies. As winners of Youth Co:Lab Philippines' 2018 "Hacksociety" innovation challenge, the team gained early seed funding and a crucial introduction to government partners. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, AI4GOV was ready with an idea. In March 2020, they rapidly developed KIRA, an AI-powered digital triage and information chatbot for the Philippine Department of Health (DOH). KIRA (short for "Knowledge in Risk Assessment") was integrated into the DOH's Facebook and Viber channels to answer citizens' COVID-19 queries, provide self-assessments, and debunk misinformation, all in real time. By mid-2021, KIRA had handled over 4.5 million interactions on Facebook and 2.8 million on Viber, making it one of the longest-running and most widely used AI tools in the Philippine public sector. The DOH's adoption of KIRA marked a milestone. While bureaucratic hurdles meant some expansions took longer than hoped (it took multiple procurement rounds to formalize the bot), the demand was clear. Government agencies now saw young innovators as viable partners for e-governance solutions.

Importantly, the story of KIRA did not end with the immediate pandemic response. As the public health context evolved, the chatbot's functionality also adapted. Its knowledge base has since been expanded to support national immunization literacy efforts, providing information that helps Barangay health workers address vaccine hesitancy in their communities. The continued use of the platform illustrates how a solution developed in response to a crisis can evolve into a longer-term public service tool, reflecting both the adaptability of the technology and the sustained relevance of the partnership.

AI4GOV's journey showcases the power of public-private youth partnerships. With an initial nudge from Youth Co:Lab – which helped the team refine their idea and network with government – the venture directly contributed to improved public service delivery. An independent evaluation of Youth Co:Lab cites AI4GOV as a prime example of a youth innovation achieving systemic change: "a youth-led solution adopted by a line ministry to serve millions of citizens"[35]. It also demonstrates the reciprocal benefit of youth engagement: by embracing the KIRA chatbot, the DOH gained a cost-effective tool to handle information flow during the pandemic, and the AI4GOV team of young entrepreneurs gained unparalleled experience navigating large-scale government collaboration (even learning about public procurement the hard way). For donors, AI4GOV's story underlines that supporting youth in digital governance innovation can yield dual rewards – more efficient, responsive public services and a generation of tech-savvy social entrepreneurs who understand how to work with public institutions. As governments in Asia-Pacific invest in e-governance, ventures like AI4GOV prove that engaging youth talent and ideas is not just a nicety, but a strategy to accelerate innovation in the public sector.

It was the first time a youth-built AI solution was integrated into national government services at scale. **"The DOH held a meeting to gather all developers and tech giants who presented proposals to help in the crisis, we got the support since we were first to demonstrate a prototype of a triage algorithm, eventually Facebook, Viber, and Google decided to collaborate instead of having separate initiatives,'"** recalls Lei Motilla of AI4GOV.

35. UNDP (2022). *Youth Co:Lab 5-Year Report (2017–2021).* (Case highlights on AI4GOV – a youth venture's deployment of the KIRA COVID-19 chatbot for the Philippine Dept. of Health, p.27).

BREAKING THE SILENCE

DEAFTAWK'S DIGITAL BRIDGE FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Photo credits: DeafTawk

Actor: Young Social Entrepreneurs (YSE team) – Ali Shabbar, Wamiq Hasan, and Abdul Qadeer, Co-founders of DeafTawk – Pakistan

Level of Change: Market Innovation & Social Inclusion (new services for a marginalized group, jobs for Deaf youth)

Streams: Downstream (startup incubation & growth), leveraged via Midstream (corporate and accelerator partnerships)

Themes: Digital Transformation (with Social Inclusion & Accessibility)

Access to communication is a daily hurdle for millions of deaf people – a challenge that DeafTawk, a youth-led startup from Pakistan, has transformed into a scalable solution. The venture began in 2018 when three young co-founders, including a software engineer who is deaf (Wamiq Hasan) and a visually impaired interpreter (Ali Shabbar), set out to create an "Uber for sign language," a mobile platform connecting Deaf users with qualified interpreters in real time. They participated in Youth Co:Lab Pakistan (2018–2019), where DeafTawk was crowned national champion, and at the 2019 Asia-Pacific Youth Co:Lab Summit, they won the Regional Inclusive Innovation Award, garnering seed funding and mentorship. "Accessibility is not a privilege; it's a right. Everyone deserves to communicate freely, access opportunities, and live with dignity. UNDP's Programme was a launching pad for us – it gave us recognition and helped us connect with a global network," recalls Ali Shabbar, reflecting on Youth Co:Lab's early support. With this boost, DeafTawk launched its app in 2019, enabling Deaf users to video-call a sign-language interpreter on demand. By late 2020, the startup had attracted accelerator backing and modest venture investment, expanding into Singapore in partnership with and Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) - SG Enable. In 2021, DeafTawk secured a US$250,000 GSMA Innovation Fund grant for assistive tech, one of only four global grantees chosen from over 350 candidates. These milestones, along with the Google Startups Accelerator (Southeast Asia) spot and the DBS Foundation Business for Impact grant (2023), provided DeafTawk with capital, expertise, and international exposure[36].

As of mid-2023, DeafTawk's platform serves over 95,000 regular users and employs a network of approximately 3,200 interpreters fluent in six sign languages. The enterprise has established operations or pilots in six countries (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Denmark, Kenya, and the United States) with a fast-growing presence across South Asia and beyond. In the 12 months leading up to mid-2023, DeafTawk generated US$1.5 million in revenue while achieving a positive net cash flow. Major telecommunications companies have taken note. Networks like Jazz (Pakistan), Dialog (Sri Lanka), Verizon (US) and Singtel (Singapore) now partner with DeafTawk to promote its service among their customers and ensure connectivity for the platform. DeafTawk's success also earned broad recognition, from the Zero Project Global Award (2021) to being selected for UNDP's global Business Call to Action platform that spotlights inclusive businesses. Meanwhile, the founders have become advocates for accessibility in tech, sharing their model at forums like Mobile World Congress and advising regional peers.[37]

DeafTawk's journey demonstrates how a modest early investment in young innovators can yield outsized social returns. It has grown into a sustainable service that removes communication barriers for tens of thousands of Deaf people, while creating income opportunities for interpreters and spurring interest in accessible technology in the private sector. It also shows the reinforcing effect of Youth Co:Lab's multi-level support. Initial funding and mentorship led to further accelerator opportunities and corporate partnerships, which in turn enabled larger scale impact. By filling a market gap, DeafTawk is not only improving quality of life for its users, but also providing a successful proof of concept that inclusion can be both socially transformative and commercially viable. This kind of "double bottom line" outcome is precisely what UNDP Moonshot's Digital Transformation focus seeks to achieve: innovative solutions that empower marginalised communities while building sustainable business models.

DeafTawk's ongoing expansion and innovation signal that **with the right support, youth-driven startups can evolve into influential global players tackling development challenges head-on.**[38]

36. UNDP (2024). *Peer Learning: Youth Empowerment Moonshot (DeafTawk Journey Slide).*
37. GSMA (2023). *"Helping the Deaf to Communicate" – Case Study.*
38. As above.

FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM – AND BEYOND

The stories above, spanning a policy reform, an ecosystem transformation, and multiple inclusive ventures, illustrate Youth Co:Lab's framework and approach in action. In each case, upstream, midstream, and downstream efforts intersected to create outcomes that are both impactful and enduring. A youth-led startup influenced a national strategy; an incubator's change improved countless future startups; a digital solution by youth became a public service. Equally important, each story informs and aligns with priority themes of the UNDP Youth Empowerment Portfolio (and Moonshot): Climate action innovated by those most affected (indigenous women in Papua), digital transformation that leaves no one behind (DeafTawk's Deaf accessibility), and governance innovation through co-creation (AI4GOV civic tech model). These are not isolated anecdotes, but rather the peak examples of broader patterns corroborated by region-wide data.[39]

These patterns highlight a deeper shift in how inclusion is understood and realised in practice. The most transformative outcomes are emerging not simply from expanding access, but from addressing the structural barriers that shape who participates and who succeeds. The evidence points consistently to the fact that the greatest untapped potential lies among young people who remain at the margins, including women, persons with disabilities, indigenous youth, and those in rural or informal economies. When these constraints are reduced, these young people do not simply enter existing ecosystems; they expand and redefine them, bringing forward new markets, solutions, and models of value that reshape how inclusive growth is realised across the region[40].

According to our MSC surveys, responding government partners reported policy or institutional outcomes, every ESO partner experienced a Programme-level transformation, and the majority of YSEs traced their entrepreneurial journey back to a personal turning point enabled by Youth Co:Lab. What makes these changes sustainable is that they were owned by the stakeholders themselves. Governments replicated models via their budgets, ESOs formed their own networks, youth entrepreneurs have built enterprises that continue to thrive independently. In development terms, this is a strong validation of YCL's approach which lies in enabling local actors effectively, that they carry the work forward.

As we look to the next decade and the Youth Moonshot goals, these stories of change provide both inspiration and guidance. They show that investing in holistic support for youth (policy, capacity, and finance together) yields outcomes far beyond what any siloed intervention could. They also highlight where we need to dig deeper. For example, scaling initiatives like AI4GOV from pilots to nationwide coverage, or ensuring that inclusive models like GAWIREA receive funding to replicate in other regions. Most importantly, the stories reinforce that youth are not just beneficiaries but drivers of systemic change. A national strategy, a community solar lab, a tech platform making governance transparent; each powered by young people's ideas and energy, with strategic support at the right moments.

In the next section (Lessons Learned), we synthesize these insights and others, distilling what worked and what barriers remain. But the overarching message is clear. Meaningful change happens when youth initiatives don't remain at the margins, instead inform and become a part of the mainstream–of institutions, markets, and social norms. Youth Co:Lab's first ten years have been about moving those margins closer to the centre. The challenge and the opportunity ahead are to accelerate this to turn dozens of success stories into hundreds, ensuring every country's policies reflect youth innovation, and build an ecosystem where all youth, regardless of gender, background, or ability, can contribute to and benefit from development. These stories of change make us confident that with sustained, well-placed investments, that vision is within reach.

39. For more examples, see Field Stories from the Margins: A Collection of Case Studies on Inclusive Youth Entrepreneurship, featuring 28 case studies from young social entrepreneurs, ecosystem partners, and government actors.

40. Youth Co:Lab (2024). From Margins to Mainstream: Inclusive Youth Entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific Region

LESSONS LEARNED

Over a decade of implementation, Youth Co:Lab has not only generated results, but accumulated lessons - shaped by the experiences of its team, partners, and young entrepreneurs. These lessons reflect a continuous process of adaptation grounded in evidence, informed by practice, and refined through engagement across diverse contexts in Asia and the Pacific.

The reflections below synthesise what has worked, where gaps remain, and how these insights can inform the next phase of youth empowerment efforts. They draw on evidence across all three streams. Where a lesson applies primarily to one stream, it is noted.

Inclusion Requires More Than Opening Doors

Youth Co:Lab's experience shows that inclusion cannot be reduced to participation alone. Over the past decade, significant effort has been made to open doors for founders from marginalised backgrounds including persons with disabilities, women, indigenous communities, LGBTIQ+ youth, and rural entrepreneurs. Youth Co:Lab cohorts reflected this diversity, because the most innovative community solutions often come from founders who have lived those challenges. However, evidence indicates that opening doors does not automatically lead to equitable outcomes.

For many young entrepreneurs, the challenge begins after entry. Entrepreneurial success is shaped not only by access to Programmes, but also by access to informal systems of knowledge such as understanding funding pathways, interpreting investor expectations, and navigating networks of opportunity. There is a hidden curriculum to entrepreneurial success. Knowing what kinds of opportunities fit their stage, what impact investors evaluate, and how to translate community impact into metrics that unlock funding requires insider knowledge that flows through networks, startup hub proximity, alumni connections and mentor relationships that marginalised founders are systematically excluded from. These forms of knowledge remain unevenly distributed and are often concentrated within established ecosystem hubs.

For some founders, the most significant change is harder to quantify. A rural founder might have a brilliant renewable energy solution, but not know which network is looking for early-stage ventures. A founder with disabilities might not know which ecosystem partners have genuinely accessible processes versus performative ones. There is an intelligence gap that perpetuates inequality in accessing startup support even when doors are nominally open. The barrier is not access to opportunity but the ability to recognise, interpret and act on it. In response, Youth Co:Lab progressively shifted its approach beyond opening doors towards strengthening navigation, translation and sustained accompaniment. This includes helping founders understand how the ecosystem operates, how to position their ventures, and how to engage strategically with partners and investors. Meaningful inclusion requires more than access. It means equipping founders to navigate rooms strategically, not just inviting them in.

An uncomfortable implication runs beneath this lesson. Jonathan Wong and Elena Mayer-Besting argue that entrepreneurship is fundamentally a question of risk, and that the ability to take that risk is itself unequally distributed. For those with financial buffers, family networks and access to capital, failure is a learning experience. For those without, it is a permanent setback. Inclusion Programmes that encourage marginalised young people to take entrepreneurial risk, without simultaneously addressing the structural conditions that make failure so costly for them, may inadvertently ask the most vulnerable to bear the heaviest burden of uncertainty. Inclusion, in this reading, is not only about who enters the ecosystem. It is about whether the ecosystem is structured so that more people can afford to try, and survive trying.[41]

41. Wong, J. & Mayer-Besting, E. (2026). As previously cited.

What We're Most Proud of Is Hardest to Measure

Across Youth Co:Lab's portfolio, many of the most significant outcomes extend beyond conventional performance indicators such as revenue growth or capital raised. Evidence from monitoring systems and MSC narratives highlights less tangible but critical dimensions of change - including increased confidence, resilience, community trust, and the embedding of inclusive values within enterprises.

Yaqi Chu, Youth Startup Support Specialist, reflects: "We are proud that founders with disabilities give back to the startup ecosystem by supporting more persons with disabilities to start their own businesses. We are proud of the female founder who built inclusive hiring practices into her enterprise from day one. We are proud of the women-led circular economy initiative that does not just reduce waste, but trains other women in sustainable livelihoods. These ripple effects — the mentorship, the modelling, the community transformation, the values that founders embed into how they build — are hard to track and attribute systematically."

A decade of evidence has revealed something that standard metrics cannot easily capture. The quality of founder commitment matters as much as quantifiable outputs. The best outcomes — the social enterprises that sustained beyond initial funding, the founders who became ecosystem builders themselves, the solutions that communities actually adopted — came from social entrepreneurs motivated by passion and a commitment to giving back.

For organisations looking to continue, expand or adopt Youth Co:Lab's approach, this means looking more systematically at what drives the success of social enterprises beyond growth rate, revenue and fundraising. Other signals matter equally: founder resilience when challenges emerge, community trust in the solution, values embedded in how enterprises operate, and a willingness to mentor others. These predict sustainability better than pitch decks.

Long Term Engagement as Critical Infrastructure

A defining insight from Youth Co:Lab's implementation is that entrepreneurial journeys do not align with Programme timelines. Critical decisions about whether to pursue investment, pivot a business model or scale operations often occur well beyond the duration of structured interventions.

A social entrepreneur might participate in a Springboard cohort in 2022, spend two years building traction in her community, and then only face a pivotal decision about which funding pathway to pursue. When a rural founder knows that someone remembers his venture, checks in periodically and celebrates small wins, he is more likely to persist through the inevitable setbacks.

Recognising this, Youth Co:Lab has increasingly invested in long-term support mechanisms including alumni networks, continued mentorship and relationship-based engagement. These structures function as a form of invisible infrastructure, enabling young entrepreneurs to access guidance, validation and opportunities at pivotal moments in their journey.

Such approaches challenge conventional notions of scalability and efficiency, but have proven essential in sustaining momentum among early-stage founders. The experience suggests that persistence in entrepreneurship is often underpinned not only by technical support but by consistent access to trusted relationships and networks over time.

What External Observers Saw That We Sometimes Missed

A decade of internal learning is enriched by perspectives from outside the Programme. The following contributed think pieces, read alongside the findings of the 2022 final evaluation, surface patterns Youth Co:Lab is still working to address and name some things the broader ecosystem got wrong, or nearly did.

Dr. Elsie Tsui (CUHK Business School) raises the techno-solutionism trap, the tendency of ecosystems including funders, educators and judges to reward technological sophistication over genuine social impact. When funding and recognition flow disproportionately to tech-enabled ventures, social enterprises doing relational, systemic work such as community rehabilitation or employment integration are starved of resources.[42] Youth Co:Lab has not been immune to this dynamic, and the pipeline of ventures it has supported increasingly reflects funders' technology priorities as much as community realities. The 2022 evaluation observed a related pattern from a different angle, noting that the Programme's most competitive formats were well suited to urban, digitally fluent youth, but required deliberate adaptation to work equally well for founders navigating intersecting barriers.[43]

Dr. Ulrike Guelich (Bangkok University, GEM Thailand) identifies a quieter failure in how the ecosystem measures itself. After a decade of activity, diagnostic tools can track entrepreneurial intent far better than entrepreneurial outcomes. No system yet traces a single youth-led venture across its full lifecycle. Informal, rural and non-tech enterprises, which represent the majority of entrepreneurial activity by volume across Asia-Pacific, remain systematically undercounted.[44]

The 2022 evaluation flagged the same structural blind spot from within, finding that monitoring data often sat in incompatible silos across national partners, making it difficult to track what was working and for whom. Without longitudinal data, Programmes cannot distinguish between healthy experimentation and structural exclusion.[45]

Fai Wechayachai (GSG Impact) offers a lesson on how ecosystems scale. Ecosystem-building remains critical precisely because opportunity across the region is uneven, with privilege and vulnerability continuing to shape what young people can access and achieve. Much of the region's ecosystem progress has been driven by private capital and civil society doing what governments would not or could not. That energy gets you a long way, but not to scale. Scale lives in the rules governing how a business registers, accesses finance and what is taught in classrooms. Myanmar is the most painful illustration, a recognisable startup ecosystem built in a few years and largely lost when the political environment shifted.[46] The evaluation similarly found that ecosystems are only as durable as the institutional routines that hold them, and that the shift to digital delivery, while enormously effective at expanding reach, could not fully replicate the depth of trust and influence generated through in-person contact.[47]

Taken together, these observations point to a shared risk: that ecosystem building, if not careful, scales what is already visible and measurable, while the founders most worth reaching remain outside the frame.

42. Tsui, E. (2026). *Tech for Good or Tech for Tech's Sake? Examining the Push for Technology in Social Entrepreneurship*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. CUHK Business School.
43. UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (2022). *Final Evaluation of the Regional Youth Project on Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Youth Co:Lab), 2017–2022*. Conducted by Dana Peebles, Kartini International.
44. Guelich, U. (2026). *What We Count and What We Miss: A Data Agenda for Youth Entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report.
45. UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (2022). As previously cited.
46. Wechayachai, F. (2026). *Building What Comes Next: Lessons from a Decade of Youth Ecosystem Building*. Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report.
47. UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (2022). As previously cited.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 AND BEYOND

FROM MOMENTUM TO MOONSHOT

As Asia and the Pacific approaches the final stretch toward the 2030 Agenda, the urgency to reimagine youth development has never been greater. The next decade will not be defined by incremental progress alone, but by how effectively societies respond to accelerating political, social, technological, and environmental transformations.

Across the region, young people are increasingly demanding a greater role in shaping their futures. From civic movements in South Asia to emerging youth-led innovation ecosystems across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, a new generation is calling not only for inclusion, but for meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Young people are no longer willing to remain at the margins of development conversations—they are demanding to become co-creators of policy, innovation, and systems transformation.

At the same time, the region faces mounting pressures. Climate shocks are intensifying, inequalities are widening, and digital disruption is accelerating faster than many institutions can adapt. These interconnected challenges require approaches that move beyond fragmented projects toward integrated, ecosystem-driven solutions capable of operating at scale.

It is within this context that Youth Co:Lab enters its next phase—and why the emergence of the Youth Moonshot agenda is both timely and necessary.

Building on nearly a decade of ecosystem building, partnerships, and youth-led innovation, the Youth Moonshot represents a shift from Programme-based engagement toward a broader regional movement - focused on systems transformation, collective action, and long-term resilience.

SIGNALS SHAPING THE FUTURE TO 2030

Several major trends and drivers are expected to shape the future of youth development and innovation across Asia and the Pacific in the years ahead.

Rising Youth Civic Engagement and Leadership

Across the region, young people are increasingly mobilizing around governance, accountability, and participation. Political and social transitions in countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal reflect growing demands for meaningful youth representation in political and civic spaces.

This trend signals a broader generational shift. Young people are seeking not only economic opportunity, but also voice, agency, and leadership in shaping the future of their societies. Supporting youth participation in governance and policy and planning processes, civic innovation, and public decision-making will therefore become increasingly central to sustainable development efforts.

Climate Urgency and the Transition to a Healthier Planet

Asia and the Pacific remains one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. Food insecurity, water stress, biodiversity loss, air pollution, and disaster risks are increasingly shaping the realities faced by young people across the region.

At the same time, youth are emerging as leaders of climate innovation—developing solutions in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, circular economies, resilience-building, and nature-positive entrepreneurship.

Despite global uncertainties and periodic pushback against climate action, the need for investment in youth-led climate solutions will only intensify. The transition toward a healthier planet represents not only an environmental imperative, but also a major opportunity for green jobs, innovation, and inclusive economic transformation.

Digital Transformation and the Emerging AI Divide

The pace of digital and artificial intelligence (AI) disruption is accelerating exponentially. While these technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for learning, entrepreneurship, and innovation, they also risk deepening inequalities if access and capabilities remain uneven.

The region has already experienced significant digital divides. The next frontier may be the emergence of an "AI divide," where unequal access to infrastructure, literacy, and opportunities further marginalizes vulnerable communities.

Yet AI and digital technologies also present opportunities for young people to leapfrog traditional barriers—if they are equipped with the skills, ethical frameworks, and enabling ecosystems needed to harness these technologies responsibly and inclusively.

Inclusion, Mobility, and Demographic Shifts

Persistent inequalities continue to shape the realities of many young people across the region, particularly young women, indigenous youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ communities, and youth on the move.

At the same time, demographic transitions are reshaping Asia and the Pacific in new ways. While many countries continue to experience large youth populations, others are rapidly aging. Migration within and across borders is transforming labour markets, education systems, and innovation ecosystems.

These shifts present both challenges and opportunities. Emerging silver economies, diaspora engagement, intergenerational collaboration, and cross-border innovation networks represent important yet underexplored areas for future investment and partnership.

Financing as the Defining Constraint of the Next Decade

Access to capital has long been identified as a barrier for young entrepreneurs across Asia-Pacific. What is less often acknowledged is how fundamentally the financing landscape has shifted over the past decade, and how much further it still needs to travel. Dr. Faiz Shah (Yunus Center, Asian Institute of Technology) traces an evolution that moves from rigid, collateral-heavy banking through microfinance and into blended impact capital, with data-driven systems now beginning to close the credit information gap that has long excluded informal and rural entrepreneurs from mainstream finance.[48]

This evolution is real, but uneven. Digital account ownership across Asia-Pacific stands at approximately 83 percent, yet business borrowing remains as low as 14 percent in some segments, particularly among rural, informal, and data-poor enterprises, a gap that reflects not lack of infrastructure, but a persistent data vacuum that channels investment toward lower-risk, urban, tech-enabled ventures.

The coming decade will test whether the region can complete this transition. Emerging frameworks offer cause for optimism. UNDP's Strategic Framework for Blended Finance, the OECD DAC Blended Finance Guidance, and Thailand's Social Enterprise Promotion Act each demonstrate that replicable, market-wide structures for inclusive youth finance are within reach. The question for Youth Moonshot and its partners is whether these models can be brought to scale before the financing gap becomes the ceiling that limits every other ambition in the ecosystem.[49]

48. Shah, F. (2026). *Financing and Financial Inclusion: Accelerating Youth-Led Economies in Asia-Pacific.* Contributed think piece for the Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report. Yunus Center, Asian Institute of Technology.

49. As above.

PRIORITIES TOWARD 2030:
FROM PROJECTS TO SYSTEMS

Looking toward 2030, there is growing recognition that traditional project-based approaches alone will not be sufficient to address the scale and complexity of emerging challenges. What is needed is a more ambitious, integrated, and ecosystem-driven approach to youth empowerment.

The Youth Moonshot agenda represents this next evolution.

Building on the foundations established through Youth Co:Lab, Youth Moonshot seeks to mobilize the collective capacities of all UNDP country offices in Asia and the Pacific, alongside the Bangkok Regional Hub, governments, private sector actors, academia, civil society, and youth networks, around a shared regional vision for youth empowerment and systems transformation.

Key priorities toward 2030 include:

Expanding support for youth-led climate action and green entrepreneurship

Strengthening digital and AI literacy, innovation, and ethical technology ecosystems

Advancing youth civic engagement, governance participation, and leadership

Embedding inclusion and diversity across all Programme streams

Strengthening entrepreneurship ecosystems through incubators, accelerators, and innovation platforms

Deepening partnerships with universities and academic institutions to support future-ready skills and leadership

Supporting locally led and government-owned youth innovation models

Expanding strategic intelligence, evidence generation, and the translation of insights into action through implementation support and regional learning platforms

This approach recognizes that sustainable impact requires all systems to work together—across sectors, institutions, and generations.

BIG BETS FOR THE NEXT DECADE

The scale of the region's challenges requires a level of ambition that matches the urgency of the moment. Youth Moonshot therefore represents not only a Programme framework, but a bold regional commitment to empowering young people at scale.

At the heart of this vision is a shift from fragmented interventions toward a whole-of-region approach, connecting all 24 UNDP country offices and the Bangkok Regional Hub under a shared ambition for youth empowerment and innovation.

One of the initiative's boldest goals is to directly engage and empower one in every hundred young people across Asia and the Pacific through leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement initiatives. In a region home to nearly 700 million young people, this represents approximately 7 million empowered youth by 2030.

However, the ambition extends beyond direct participation. Youth Moonshot seeks to catalyze a multiplier effect, where every empowered young person contributes to positive change within their communities and networks. Through youth-led enterprises, community initiatives, innovation platforms, and peer learning, the initiative aims to indirectly benefit more than 35 million people across the region.

Partnerships will remain central to this architecture. Building on the ecosystem foundations established through Youth Co:Lab, Youth Moonshot aims to expand collaboration from nearly 1,000 existing partners to a regional alliance of more than 10,000 partners by 2030, spanning governments, academia, youth organizations, civil society, private sector actors, philanthropies, and innovation ecosystems.

Financing will also be critical to achieving this ambition. Youth Moonshot seeks to mobilize and align more than USD 250 million in youth-focused investments across the region, supporting ecosystem development, innovation financing, local programmeming, and long-term systems change.

These ambitions represent deliberate "big bets" for the future—investments in young people, ecosystems, and partnerships at a scale capable of shaping the next generation of development in Asia and the Pacific.

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ANNEXE -I

ETHICS AND CONSENT FORM

Youth Co:Lab, co-led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Citi Foundation, is preparing a 10-Year Impact Report and related publications (including think pieces, blogs, and communications materials). You are invited to complete this form because your name, story, quotation, or authored content is referenced in one or more of these materials.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citi Foundation put premium value to the privacy and security of personal data entrusted by its stakeholders (e.g. project partners, and participants) for legitimate purposes.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decline consent, request changes, or withdraw your consent at any time prior to publication, without any negative consequences.

If you wish to have the Youth Co:Lab team correct or delete your data, and/or restrict the processing of your data, please contact us and indicate your specific requests at [email].

For more information on how we ensure the secure use of valuable information you may check out the following:

DATA PRIVACY, ETHICS, AND PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE ON BIG DATA FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 2030 AGENDA: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG_BigData_final_web.pdf

UN PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY POLICY:

https://popp.undp.org/policy-page/personal-data-protection-and-privacy-policy

Participant Details

Last Name:

First Name:

Role, Organization:

Country (Citizenship):

Consent

Content covered by this consent

Select all that apply
◊ Excerpt describing my work or experience
◊ Direct quotation attributed to me
◊ Case study or story of change featuring my initiative
◊ Think piece / blog authored by me
◊ Other

Intended use of the content: I understand that the content described above may be used for the following purposes:
◊ Youth Co:Lab 10-Year Impact Report (print and digital)
◊ Youth Co:Lab, UNDP and Citi websites and online platforms
◊ Blogs, think pieces, and learning products
◊ Communications, advocacy, and donor materials

Informed consent & confirmation

I confirm that:
1. I have reviewed the excerpt(s) or description of the content referencing me;
2. I understand how the content will be used; and
3. I **voluntarily give my consent** for its use as described above.

◊ Yes
◊ No

Attribution and preferences
◊ I agree to be credited by name and affiliation
◊ I prefer to be anonymised
◊ I request minor edits or clarifications prior to publication

Withdrawal and contact

I understand that I may **withdraw my consent at any time prior to publication** by contacting the Youth Co:Lab team, and that my data will then not be used in published materials.
◊ I acknowledge and agree to the above.

ANNEXE -II

MSC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

Policymakers (Upstream)

Introduction

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique helps us capture transformative stories that reflect how Youth Co:Lab (YCL) has influenced policy environments and systemic change. Your insights matter. They will contribute to the YCL 10-Year Impact Report and inform future strategies for youth empowerment across Asia-Pacific.

Purpose of this Kit

- Document the most significant policy or systemic change influenced by YCL.
- Highlight shifts in governance, institutional frameworks, or enabling environments for youth.
- Ensure stories align with YCL's thematic areas: Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Climate Action, Civic Engagement, and Diversity & Inclusion.

General Storytelling Prompt

Think of a moment when a policy shift or systemic change occurred because of YCL's influence. Describe that moment and why it matters for youth empowerment.

Step 1: Identify the Change

What is the most significant policy, institutional, or systemic change that happened with support or influence from SIH/YCL?

Be specific, for example, a policy adoption, regulatory improvement, new institutional mechanism, improved coordination, data or diagnostic influence, youth consultation mechanism, or similar change.

Step 2: Tell Your Story

- What happened?
- Why is this change significant for youth and for the youth-entrepreneurship ecosystem?
- Who were the key actors involved?
- What institutional or ecosystem enablers helped make this change possible, such as data, evidence, diagnostics, inclusive youth voice, or partnerships?
- What challenges did you overcome in achieving this change?

Step 3: Reflect on Impact

- What have you seen changed so far, for example, a new institutional mechanism, youth consulted in policymaking, better regulation, or improved data systems?
- How has the enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship shifted?
- To what extent is this change likely to be sustained or scaled?
- Has it influenced other policies, Programmes, budgets, stakeholder behaviour, or institutional culture?
- Which thematic area, industry, or SDG does this change relate to?

Submission Formats

- Microsoft or Google Form
- Supporting documents, such as policy briefs, official statements, or legislative references

Ethical and Inclusion Guidelines

- Use gender-sensitive and inclusive language.
- Complete the consent form for stories and media.

ANNEXE -II

MSC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

ESOs (Midstream)

Introduction

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique helps us capture stories of collaboration and systemic influence through Youth Co:Lab (YCL). Your perspective is vital. It will contribute to the YCL 10-Year Impact Report and showcase how partnerships drive youth empowerment.

Purpose of this Kit

- Document the most significant change resulting from your partnership with YCL.
- Highlight collaborative efforts, ecosystem strengthening, and systemic impact.
- Align stories with YCL's thematic areas: Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Climate Action, Civic Engagement, and Diversity & Inclusion.

General Storytelling Prompt

Think of a moment when collaboration with YCL led to a breakthrough for youth empowerment. Describe that moment and why it matters for the ecosystem.

Step 1: Identify the Change

What is the most significant change you experienced or observed through your collaboration with YCL?

Step 2: Tell Your Story

- What happened?
- Why is this change significant for youth and the ecosystem?
- Who were the key actors involved?
- What challenges did you encounter?

Step 3: Reflect on Impact

- How has this change strengthened partnerships or networks in your community?
- Has this change contributed to systemic transformation or policy influence?

Step 4: Connect to YCL Goals

- Which thematic area does your story relate to?

ANNEXE -II

MSC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

YSEs (Downstream)

Introduction

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique helps us capture transformative stories that reflect the real impact of Youth Co:Lab (YCL) on YSEs. Your story matters. It will contribute to the YCL 10-Year Impact Report and inspire others across Asia-Pacific.

Purpose of this Kit

- Document the most significant change you experienced through YCL support.
- Highlight personal, community, and systemic impact.
- Ensure stories align with YCL's thematic areas: Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Climate Action, Civic Engagement, and Diversity & Inclusion.

General Storytelling Prompt

Think of a moment when you realized your work was making a real difference. Describe that moment and why it matters to you.

Step 1: Identify the Change

What is the most significant change you experienced because of YCL?

Step 2: Tell Your Story

- What happened?
- Why is this change significant to you?
- Who was involved?
- What challenges did you overcome?
- Has this change contributed to any impact in your community, among peers, ecosystem, or even country?

Step 3: Reflect on Impact

- For the work that you do, what does changing systems mean to you?
- How has this change affected your community, business, or personal growth?

Step 4: Connect to YCL Goals

- Which thematic area, industry, or SDG does your story relate to?

ANNEXE -III

Key Informant Interview (KII) questions for YSEs

Initiative Update

- In one sentence, how would you describe what your venture does and who it serves now?
- How has your product, service, or business model evolved over time?
- What are the factors that helped you achieve your goals, or played a big role in your personal growth as a founder? What are the factors that helped your business grow?

Attribution

- Since joining Youth Co:Lab, what would you say are the 2-3 biggest milestones your venture has achieved?
- Which part of that support had the biggest impact on your growth, and why?
- Can you share a specific moment or example where Youth Co:Lab made a tangible difference?
- Are there other support programmes or accelerators you participated in after Youth Co:Lab? How would you compare them?
- Have you received any awards, investment, or significant recognition since then?
- Do you think your venture would have reached the same stage without Youth Co:Lab's support? Why or why not?

System Change

- What changes have you seen in the social entrepreneurship space/broader startup ecosystem over the past decade/years? Can you describe one example where your initiative triggered other actors to act differently?
- [Institutional or Policy Uptake] Have any of your ideas, tools, or models been replicated, or adapted by larger institutions, like governments, corporates, schools, or NGOs? If so, how?
- [Mindset or Narrative Shifts] Have you noticed any change in how people think or talk about the problem you're solving - among the public, media, or key stakeholders? What role did your venture play in shaping that change?
- [Unexpected Ripple Effects] Were there any unexpected outcomes from your work — for example, people using your solution in new ways, entering new sectors, or starting new initiatives inspired by yours?

AI & Technology Integration

- Have you integrated AI technology into your products and services? If so, how?
- How do you see UNDP and tech companies helping to scale your AI-related services/products to benefit more customers?

Future Plan:

What's next for your venture in the next 1–2 years?

Citi Foundation