

## **Youth Co:Lab “Hong Kong Dialogue” Promotes Holistic Youth Health**

### **Regional Dialogue to Inspire Youth Leadership Building an Inclusive Society and Developing Social Creativity**

(Hong Kong, December 6, 2021) Co-led by Citi Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and organized by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), the 2021 Youth Co:Lab Hong Kong Dialogue took place last week themed “Youth’s Wellbeing and Health”. The event brought together hundreds of educators, social workers, government officials, social entrepreneurs and young people to examine critically the health and wellbeing issues affecting young people in Hong Kong. Various perspectives, ranging from policy, service and social innovation to finding solutions for building a more inclusive and pluralistic society, were explored through online seminars, creative experiential workshops and interactive sharing sessions.

Officiating at the opening session of the Hong Kong Dialogue were: Mr. Chris Fung, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health of the Hong Kong SAR Government; Ms Susan Kwek, Managing Director and Head of Operations & Technology at Citi Hong Kong; Mr. Beniam Gebrezghi, Programme Specialist of Youth and Civic Engagement of the United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub; and Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

Hong Kong Dialogue is one of 11 Youth Co:Lab national dialogues being held around the region this year. Youth Co:Lab, which was co-created in 2017 by Citi Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is the largest youth social entrepreneurship movement in Asia Pacific and aims to drive a shared agenda for Asia-Pacific countries to empower young people to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Mr. Chris Fung, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health of the Hong Kong SAR Government remarked: “Youth is an exciting yet turbulent stage in life, especially when it is coupled with the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Government has spared no effort to handle the mental health needs and wellbeing of our young people.

The Government has been adopting an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach towards mental health. Other than treatment, we also focus on promotion, prevention, early identification, timely intervention, and rehabilitation. In doing so, we rely not only on the support of our healthcare professionals, but also of other key stakeholders in the society, including professionals in the social welfare and education sectors.”

Ms Susan Kwek, Managing Director and Head of Operations & Technology, Citi Hong Kong, said: “We are excited to bring Hong Kong Dialogue to the city and to engage youth social entrepreneurs and people from different walks of life together to discuss their opportunities as well as the social challenges that the city is facing. Citi Foundation will continue investing in Youth Co:Lab to reach more young people across the Asia Pacific, to deepen mentorship capacity for youth entrepreneurs through the Springboard program and to engage ecosystem partners in the development of young people’s future skills training.”

Mr. Beniam Gebrezghi, Programme Specialist of Youth and Civic Engagement of the United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub, remarked: "The inspirations we receive and actions we take today will ensure we are better placed to respond to the challenges of tomorrow."

"Under the new normal, it is inevitable that people will be under pressure to adapt to a new lifestyle. We hope the Hong Kong Dialogue can create a platform to bring the issue of youth mental health and well-being to the forefront, and find answers together," said Mr. Hoi Wai Chua, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. "In recent years, we have noticed young people expressing their aspirations through different creative approaches, engaging in social innovation and community programmes. We hope this year's Hong Kong Dialogue will showcase the multi-faceted nature of young people."

Youth Co:Lab "Hong Kong Dialogue" was held from December 3 to 4. The event included a series of online seminars, sharing sessions and creative experiential workshops to explore how young people can prepare themselves to cope with adversity and rise to the challenges of the new normal. It also covered the impact of social innovation and how it can help build a resilient society.

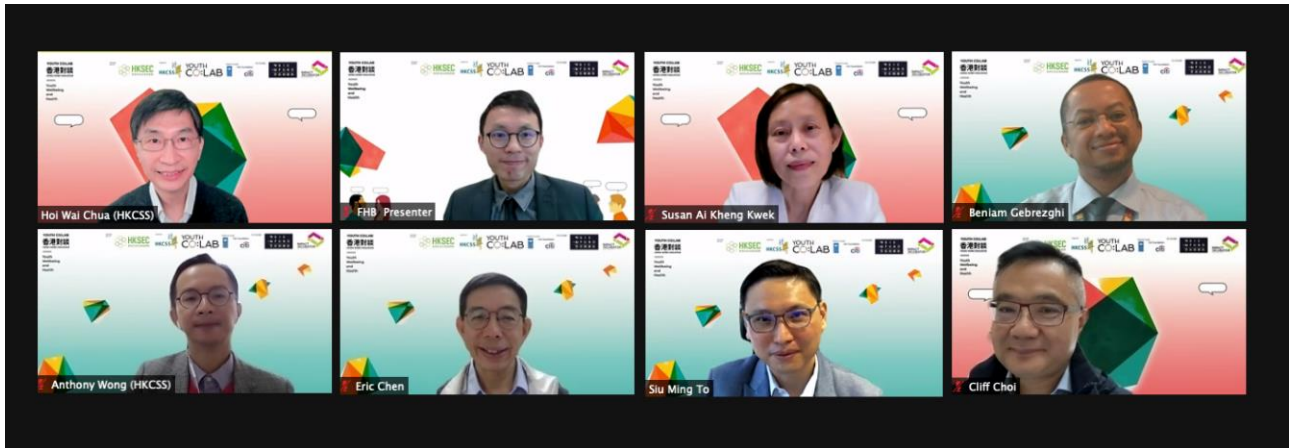
A number of scholars in the field of adolescent mental health were invited to attend the keynote session, including Professor Eric Chen, Chair Professor of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Hong Kong (HKU), and Dr. To Siu Ming, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Work, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). In the keynote session, the two academics shared their key research findings on the stress and mental health risks young people face in the context of social change, as well as innovative ways in which society can reconnect to its young people.

Young social entrepreneurs from different parts of Asia Pacific and young people with non-mainstream aspirations were invited to share their experiences on how to live out their values through different forms of social innovation and contribute to the promotion of social inclusion and diversity. In addition, a number of local social innovation groups organized a variety of creative experiential workshops, utilizing music, art, and sports to explore issues of youth wellbeing and mental health.

Over the last four years, Youth Co:Lab has been implemented in 28 countries and territories across the region, reaching over 202,000 participants. The initiative has benefitted more than 9,500 young social entrepreneurs and helped launch or improve nearly 1,240 social enterprises. Youth Co:Lab has also established partnerships with more than 200 key ecosystem players to strengthen the Youth Empowerment Alliance.

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Photo caption:



This year's Youth Co:Lab "Hong Kong Dialogue", with the theme of "Youth's Wellbeing and Health", has now successfully concluded. The two-day event explored mental health and wellbeing issues faced by young people in Hong Kong from multiple perspectives, and developed a spirit of co-creation, promoting holistic health, and finding appropriate solutions to build an inclusive and pluralistic society.

Officiating guests, facilitator and speakers of the keynote session:

(Upper row from left to right) Mr. Hoi Wai Chua, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service; Mr Chris Fung, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health, Hong Kong SAR Government; Ms. Susan Kwek, Managing Director & Head of Operations & Technology, Citi Hong Kong and Mr. Beniam Gebrezghi, Programme Specialist of Youth and Civic Engagement, United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub.

(Lower row from left to right) Mr. Wong Kin Wai, Anthony, Business Director, HKCSS; Prof. Eric Chen, Chair Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Hong Kong; Dr. To Siu Ming, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Chinese University of Hong Kong and Mr. Cliff Choi, Business Director, HKCSS.

### **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, catalyze job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant cities. The Citi Foundation's "More than Philanthropy" approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation. For more information, visit [www.citifoundation.com](http://www.citifoundation.com)

### **Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS)**

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) works to promote a just and inclusive society by promoting collaborative efforts among NGOs in service planning and development, facilitating cross-sectoral partnership, advocating equality, justice, social integration and a caring community. The Council has now become an umbrella organisation of over 490 Agency Members that provide quality social welfare services for those in need through service units all over Hong Kong.

Additional information may be found at [www.hkcss.org.hk](http://www.hkcss.org.hk) | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/hkcssfans](https://www.facebook.com/hkcssfans)

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at [undp.org](https://undp.org) or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP)