

Youth Co:Lab Hong Kong Dialogue Empowers Equal Future for Youth

A city-wide discourse to inspire youth-led movement towards social inclusion and social entrepreneurship

(Hong Kong, December 6, 2020) The 2020 Youth Co:Lab Hong Kong Dialogue, themed “Making Progress in Fostering Equalities”, concluded fruitfully yesterday. The two-day virtual forum connected hundreds of participants, including academics, social welfare professionals, social entrepreneurs, policymakers and youth leaders, to discuss the pressing challenges facing marginalized and disadvantaged youth in the city and to focus on social inclusion solutions regarding public policy, social services and social innovation.

Hong Kong's chapter is one of 25 Youth Co:Lab dialogues being held around the Asia-Pacific region this year. Co-created in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for countries and jurisdictions in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth, so that they can accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship. The Hong Kong Dialogue is organized by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS).

Officiating at the opening session of the Hong Kong Dialogue were Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive of the HKCSS; Mr. Wayne Fong, Head of Corporate Affairs, Citi Hong Kong, and Mr. Savinda Ranathunga, Regional Youth Project Manager, UNDP, Asia-Pacific.

“I wish to highlight that young people are experts in matters affecting their lives and active agents for social change, not to mention they are entitled to participation as a fundamental right. Young people must be engaged as equal partners and their rights should be fully recognized for the benefit of society. There is no better way of learning about their own experiences than to listen to their stories,” said Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive of the HKCSS. “Young people are not a homogenous group. It is hoped that through open-minded dialogues between youth and non-youth stakeholders, a better understanding of the problems confronting young people will be achieved, thereby facilitating both short-term and long-term solutions.”

“We are glad to see Hong Kong Dialogue has brought to light one of the issues we strive to resolve,” remarked Mr. Wayne Fong, Head of Corporate Affairs for Citi Hong Kong. “At Citi, we have dedicated continued efforts to equipping young people to succeed in today’s economy via our global initiative [Pathways to Progress](#). Open and meaningful discourse and cross-sector partnerships fostered here are conducive to creating equal economic opportunities for undervalued youth in the city. Young people are crucial and powerful catalysts for positive change and innovation. We strive to be a key player in facilitating youth equalities, and making resources, services and opportunities accessible for them to realize their fullest potential.”

“The youth of today, are more connected, more creative, more informed and more persuasive than any previous generation in the history of time, however we are also witnessing various trends in rising inequalities across Asia and the Pacific,” said Mr. Savinda Ranathunga, Regional Youth Project Manager at UNDP, Asia-Pacific. “Sustainable Development Goals set a strong message on inequality, we won’t be achieving SDGs unless we progress with everyone, everywhere.”

The two-day Youth Co:Lab Hong Kong Dialogue took place on December 4 and 5 and featured a series of online Human Library sessions examining the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged youth sectors, including those with special education needs (SEN), ethnic minorities (EM) and young people with aspirations different from the mainstream. There were also panel discussions exploring possible ways to address social inequality, which has become more significant due to the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Various renowned scholars, including Prof. Wong Hung, Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and Dr. Paul Wong, Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong and Prof. Donna Chu, Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), spoke live during the keynote session, highlighting their research findings regarding oppressive conditions that young people experience from economic, mental health and cultural perspectives. They also contributed actionable suggestions on realizing youth-led social inclusion.

In addition, several young people with special education needs and from ethnic minorities, as well as social entrepreneurs, participated in the discourse to share their personal experiences concerning social participation, identity, and social exclusion. They were joined by representatives from local schools, social welfare groups and public sectors to engage in constructive dialogues on how to address oppressive conditions and improve youth outcomes in the areas of public policy, social services and social innovation.

Launched in 2017, Youth Co:Lab has been implemented in 25 countries and territories across Asia Pacific. In hope of achieving the SDGs, the youth-led movement positions young people front and center to solve the region's toughest challenges in the 21st century. Youth Co:Lab facilitates accessible resources and networks with an integrated entrepreneurship ecosystem connecting governments, civil society and the private sector, which gives these young leaders the support they need to transform their budding innovations into viable business models and solutions with sustainable social impact. The national dialogues, regional summits and social innovation challenges have reached over 75,000 participants, benefitted over 7,100 young social entrepreneurs and helped launch or improve nearly 650 youth-led social enterprises around the region.

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Photos



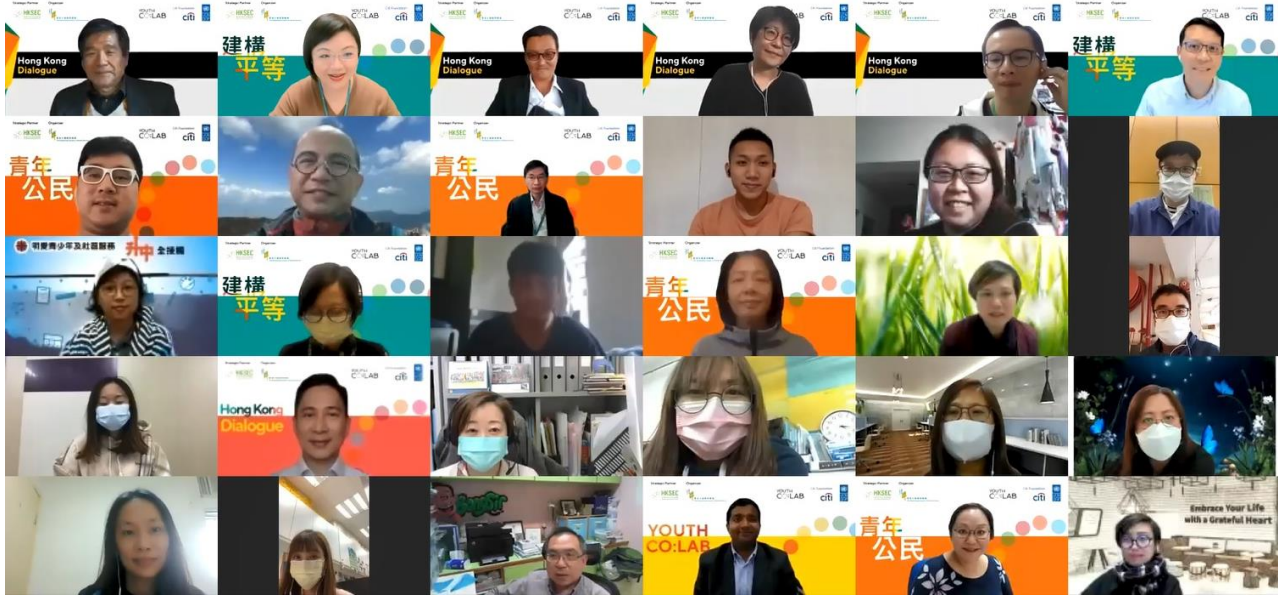
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Officiating guests:

- Mr. Chua Hoi Wai, Chief Executive of the HKCSS (first row right)
- Mr. Wayne Fong, Head of Corporate Affairs, Citi Hong Kong (first row left)
- Mr. Savinda Ranathunga, Regional Youth Project Manager, UNDP, Asia-Pacific (second row left)

Keynote speakers:

- Prof. Wong Hung, Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (third row right)
- Dr. Paul Wong, Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong (second row right)
- Prof. Donna Chu, Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (third row left)



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

Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS)

Established in 1947, 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 | Facebook: 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 or follow at [@UNDP](https://www.instagram.com/undp)