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**For Immediate Release**

**April 4, 2019**

**United Nations Development Programme and Citi Foundation  
Jointly Host The 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Youth Co: Lab Summit  
To Accelerate The Largest Youth Social Entrepreneurship  
Movement In The Region**

***Youth Co:Lab, the project co-led by UNDP and Citi Foundation, is the largest youth-led social entrepreneurship movement driving the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.***

**Hanoi, Vietnam** – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citi Foundation, with the collaboration and support from the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Viet Nam Volunteer Center, opened the second Asia Pacific Youth Co:Lab Summit, in Hanoi today. The flagship event brings together over 500 delegates, including hundreds of youth, partners and government officials from 20 countries, to exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences, to influence policy initiatives on youth entrepreneurship and social innovation.

According to the Asia Pacific Human Development Report 2016, more than half the young people in the world today live in Asia Pacific and 1.7 billion are under 25. The report further states that close to 71 million young people, aged 15 to 24, are unemployed worldwide, of which 33 million are in Asia Pacific alone. Nearly 220 million young people are neither at school, nor at work, presenting a daunting crisis that calls for an urgent response.

Co-created in 2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims 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.

Over the last two years, Youth Co:Lab projects have been implemented in 20 countries and territories across the region, with national dialogues, regional summits and social innovation challenges reaching over 48,000 participants. The initiative has benefitted over 2,500 young social entrepreneurs and helped launch or improve nearly 500 social enterprises.

Youth Co:Lab has also established partnerships with more than 100 key ecosystem players to strengthen the Youth Empowerment Alliance to support young entrepreneurs, particularly young women and marginalized youth, by connecting them with businesses, incubators, accelerators, and financing mechanisms to develop their ideas into viable business models for sustainable social impact.

Speaking this morning at the opening of the summit in National Economics University, Hanoi were : Valerie Cliff, UNDP Deputy Regional Director for Asia & the Pacific; Brandee McHale, President of the Citi Foundation and Head of Corporate Citizenship at Citi; Caitlin Wiesen,

Resident Representative, UNDP Viet Nam; Tran Van Tung, Vice Minister, Ministry of Science and Technology, Viet Nam; Phạm Hồng Chương, Vice Rector, National Economics University of Viet Nam.

“As I see the first generation of Youth Co:Lab social entrepreneurs flourish and carry their own initiatives forward, I am reminded of the reason why this work is so important: young people really do hold the key to social change,” said Valerie Cliff, UNDP Deputy Regional Director for Asia & the Pacific. “This is how we can align the grit and determination of young change makers to meet the ambition of the SDGs. Our mandate at Youth Co:Lab is to play the role of an integrator and strengthen the ecosystem connecting young people with governments and businesses to scale impact.”

“Youth Co:Lab’s approach of listening to the perspectives and ideas of young people, and empowering them to drive business solutions that address our world’s most pressing issues is how real change happens,” added Brandee McHale, President of the Citi Foundation. “Only by joining forces with multiple actors from the public and private sector, social partners, civil society and beyond can we work towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals.”

“In the current context of global integration and development, startups and innovation play an important role in economic development, addressing global difficulties and challenges as well as achieving sustainable development in each country and all over the world,” Vice Minister of Science and Technology, Tran Van Tung, said in his opening remarks. “The Youth Co:Lab Summit 2019, jointly organized by UNDP and Citi Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology, is a significant event for the innovative startup community and the social impact enterprises, in particular. The summit will enable an exchange of ideas and help further developing the start-ups, through incubation, innovation, expanding connections and international cooperation.”

The two-day summit brings together several keynote speakers, prominent social entrepreneurs, youth change makers, principal government officials and leading ecosystem players, including: Reyhan Jamalova, Founder of Rainergy, Azerbaijan; Jack Sim, Founder of the World Toilet Organization; H.E. Mohamed Azmeel, Dept. Minister of Youth, Maldives; Mr. D.C. Dissanayake, Secretary to the Ministry of Digital Infrastructure and Information Technology, Sri Lanka and Mr. Jame Ceasar Alejandro Ventura, Commissioner at large of National Youth Commission of the Philippines.

The summit will conclude with the Youth Co:Lab Regional Social Innovation Challenge, where 30 teams, pre-selected during the national social innovation challenges held across 16 countries respectively, will pitch and showcase their social enterprises and ideas to a panel of esteemed judges.

### **About the 2019 Youth Co:Lab Summit**

The second Asia Pacific Youth Co:Lab Summit, being held in Hanoi, Viet Nam from 2nd -5th April, will bring together key stakeholders - youth, government officials, the private sector, representatives from the UN and other international organizations to collectively work towards building an ecosystem conducive to driving social change through innovation and entrepreneurship. Specially designed thematic discussions on focus areas will facilitate an exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences to influence policy.

Any interest to speak with the participants can be conveyed to the media contacts included in this press release.

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**About Citi**

Citi, the leading global bank, has approximately 200 million customer accounts and does business in more than 160 countries and jurisdictions. Citi provides consumers, corporations, governments and institutions with a broad range of financial products and services, including consumer banking and credit, corporate and investment banking, securities brokerage, transaction services, and wealth management.

Additional information may be found at [www.citigroup.com](http://www.citigroup.com) | Twitter: @Citi | YouTube: [www.youtube.com/citi](http://www.youtube.com/citi) | Blog: <http://blog.citigroup.com> | Facebook: [www.facebook.com/citi](http://www.facebook.com/citi) | LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/citi](http://www.linkedin.com/company/citi)

**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, 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).

**About UNDP**

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations. [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

**About Youth Co:Lab****YOUTH LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
BRIEF CONTEXT**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the important role of youth in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and calls for action against the challenges faced by young people that limits their economic, social and political inclusion. Today, young people are more connected, more creative, more informed and more persuasive than any previous generation. Young people are responding to the challenges of today with innovative approaches, contributing fresh ideas, creating the world they want, and driving human development for themselves, their communities and their societies. But at the same time, approximately 300 million young people are either unemployed or underemployed. In other words, nearly half of the 700 million young people in the region face economic insecurity. In addition, many young people are left out of decision making processes, which further contributes to their marginalization and exclusion.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVE**

Co-created in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for Asia-Pacific countries to invest in and empower youth to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship. By developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, catalyzing and sustaining youth-led startups and social enterprises across the region, Youth Co:Lab is positioning young people front and center in order to solve the region's most pressing challenges. In addition to supporting youth entrepreneurship, Youth Co:Lab also works closely with multiple stakeholders across the region, including governments, civil society and the private sector, to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem and policy support to better enable young people to take the lead on new solutions that will help meet the SDGs.

## **PROJECT OUTPUTS**

- ✓ Hosting national and regional dialogues, social innovation challenges, and other events across the region to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of young people, foster youth-led entrepreneurship, provide leadership training opportunities for young people and raise awareness about the SDGs in order to accelerate their implementation.
- ✓ Creating a Youth Empowerment Alliance to support young entrepreneurs – particularly young women and marginalized youth – by connecting them with businesses, incubators, accelerators, and financing mechanisms to develop their ideas into viable business models for sustainable social impact.
- ✓ Convening network and policy dialogues to help create, through the development of partnerships and the adoption of policy, an environment whereby young change-makers can have access to the space and resources needed to drive social change in their communities and societies.
- ✓ Producing action-oriented research on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, youth entrepreneurship and innovation.
- ✓ Building a sustainable platform for long-term, multi-stakeholder national and regional engagement.

## **PROJECT RESULTS & WHAT'S AHEAD**

Over the last two years, Youth Co:Lab has been implemented in 20 countries and territories across the region. The national dialogues, regional summits and social innovation challenges, reached over 48,000 participants. The initiative has benefitted over 2,500 young social entrepreneurs and helped launch or improve nearly 500 social enterprises. Youth Co:Lab has also established partnerships with over 100 key ecosystem players to strengthen the Youth Empowerment Alliance.

In 2019, Youth Co:Lab aims to expand to at least 25 countries and territories, deepen mentorship capacity for youth entrepreneurs through the Springboard programme, and engage ecosystem partners in the development of young people's 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

## **THE 20 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES FOR 2018/2019**

1. Bangladesh
2. Bhutan
3. China
4. Fiji
5. India
6. Indonesia
7. Hong Kong
8. Malaysia
9. Maldives
10. Myanmar
11. Nepal
12. Philippines
13. Singapore
14. Samoa
15. Solomon Islands
16. Sri Lanka
17. Thailand
18. Timor Leste
19. Vanuatu
20. Vietnam