



Project Co-Leads



Citi Foundation



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**UN Development Programme and Citi Foundation
Jointly Host Youth Social Entrepreneurship Programme “Youth Co: Lab Japan”**

*SDG entrepreneurs’ contest “Social Innovation Challenge Japan 2020”
Excellence Award goes to ECOLOGGIE, Mr. Seiya Ashikari*

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Citi Foundation held “Youth Co:Lab,” the largest movement in the Asia-Pacific region to support young social entrepreneurs in starting and growing businesses that accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for the second year in Japan.

Key highlights of this year’s programme include “Japan Dialogue,” a symposium in which experts and young entrepreneurs discussed ways to nurture young entrepreneurs who are trying to solve social and environmental problems, was held on two occasions, in September and November. “Social Innovation Challenge Japan 2020”, an SDG entrepreneur contest, was held on November 24. All events were held online this year to protect the safety and health of participants amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The first Japan Dialogue session was entitled “Why social entrepreneurship in the age of COVID-19?” The panel discussion focused on entrepreneurs in various parts of the world who aspire to build a sustainable society in these very difficult times. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social problems such as poverty and inequality into relief and forced us to make changes to our lifestyles and societies. Toshihiro Nakamura, Co-Founder and CEO of Kopernik moderated the discussion. Other speakers included Rika Yajima, Representative Director of aeru, Yuriko Murakami, CEO of HerBest, and Yoichi Shimada, Representative Director of Connect Afya. The panelists discussed about the significance of social entrepreneurship amid the COVID-19 crisis and opportunities during challenging times.

The second Japan Dialogue session was entitled “How would you make an ecosystem for entrepreneurs in the age of COVID-19 pandemic?” Millennial generation panelists with different backgrounds discussed the mechanisms and ecosystems needed to promote social innovation and entrepreneurship among young people, and the future of support for Japanese entrepreneurs. Panelists included representatives from ANRI, a venture capital firm that manages the largest seed fund in Japan, and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)’s startup and new business creation/promotion office, as well as experts in social impact investment in Japan and overseas. The moderator, Mariko McTier, has helped launch various social businesses and last year she co-founded MyMizu, an app that enables users to find free water supply spots, the first of its kind in Japan. McTier is also a Youth Co:lab alumna, who was one of the winners of the Social Innovation Challenge Japan 2019.

Youth Co:Lab's pitch contest, Social Innovation Challenge Japan 2020 received over 50 entries from around the country and abroad and nine passed the first and the second screening. At the final pitch event, the nine finalists pitched their SDG business ideas to the judges and an online audience of about 250 people. Among them, four finalists were chosen as the prize winners. The Excellence Award went to "Cricket as Food and Feed", ECOLOGGIE (Mr. Seiya Ashikari), the Scalability Award to "OnlinexInternational Exchange: Study SDGs together with those of the same generation across the world", With The World (Mr. Shunta Igarashi), the CVC Award to "OnlinexInternational Exchange: Study SDGs together with those of the same generation across the world", With The World (Mr. Shunta Igarashi) and "Travel around the world in your city, Hello World" (Ms. Marimo Higa), the Audience Award to "Travel around the world in your city, Hello World" (Ms. Marimo Higa) and Judge's Special Award to "Manasa Mora: Laundry service for women's empowerment and reduction of malaria" (Ms. Yoko Inagaki).

These four winners, along with teams selected in Youth Co:Lab contests in 25 other Asia-Pacific countries/regions, will participate in an accelerator programme called "Springboard Programme" starting in January 2021. The two Japanese teams that achieve the best results in this programme will win the right to participate in the Regional Summit as representatives from Japan.

Mr. Seiya Ashikari, the Excellence Award winner, said: "We are very happy to receive the Excellence Award at this event. Through this programme, I hope to grow my business and contribute to the achievement of various SDGs."

Tetsuo Kondo, Director of the UNDP Representation Office in Japan, said: "While it is often said that we live in a fast-changing and unstable time, the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating these trends. At a time like this, it is meaningless to try to replicate patterns that were successful in the past. We must monitor trends closely and respond to changes to create new value. Not all of us are entrepreneurs, but I think everyone, whatever they do, should have an entrepreneurial mindset. The UNDP aims to bring governments, business entities and NGOs together to create a system for incubating and nurturing more social entrepreneurs in Japan through Youth Co:Lab."

Lee Waite, Citi Country Officer for Japan, said: "I am very pleased that we were able to carry out the Youth Co:Lab programme this year. I am also impressed by the strong desire of many young entrepreneurs to use their own initiative to solve problems through innovative business ideas. With our environment constantly changing amid the COVID-19 crisis, our society needs fresh solutions more than ever. I hope our support to young social entrepreneurs will not only shed light on various social problems, including new ones arising from the pandemic, but also promote efforts to drive positive impact."

About Youth Co:Lab:

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. By 2021, Youth Co: Lab aims to expand to 28 countries and territories, deepen mentorship capacity for youth entrepreneurs through the Springboard Programme, and engage ecosystem partners in the development of young people's 21st Century skills.

Further details and ongoing updates on the Youth Co:Lab Japan can be found on UNDP Tokyo's website and social media:

www.jp.undp.org | Twitter: @UNDPTokyo | Facebook: @UndpTokyo

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.

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.

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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 communities. The Citi Foundation's "More than Philanthropy" approach deploys 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.

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