

# The Birth of the Young Changemaker Incubator - A Hong Kong SDG Initiative

*ITS, MXA and Global Citizen Capital are proud to showcase Asia's largest cohort of university and high school students advancing the SDGs for UN75 #ACT4SDGs.*

HONG KONG, CHINA, October 30, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Hong Kong's Young Changemaker Incubator (YCI) hosted Asia's largest cohort of university and high school students advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through initiatives registered with the United Nations (UN) and ACT4SDGs. Launched by [ITS Education Asia](#), [the MXA Group](#) and Global Citizen Capital, YCI aims to interface traditional education with palpable impacts in the community, crafted by the hands of our youth.

## The Birth

Inspired by the UN SDG Action Campaign's renewed focus during COVID-19 and its mission to empower young leaders to achieve the Global Goals this decade, Kenneth Kwok of the MXA Group came to ITS with the hopes of bringing this sort of post-academic ethos to Hong Kong, a city with an individual-centric academic ecosystem slanted towards curricular excellence. His passion was to develop experience-based education revolving around the UN and its 17 SDGs.

We came from the problem in synergistic directions. ITS focused on the educational aspect, getting students to approach problems with same research and diligence as a productive academic. MXA focused on bringing students into relevant networks, and helping students build a brand and profile they can call their own. We ran a pilot to see how students would adopt this hybrid education.

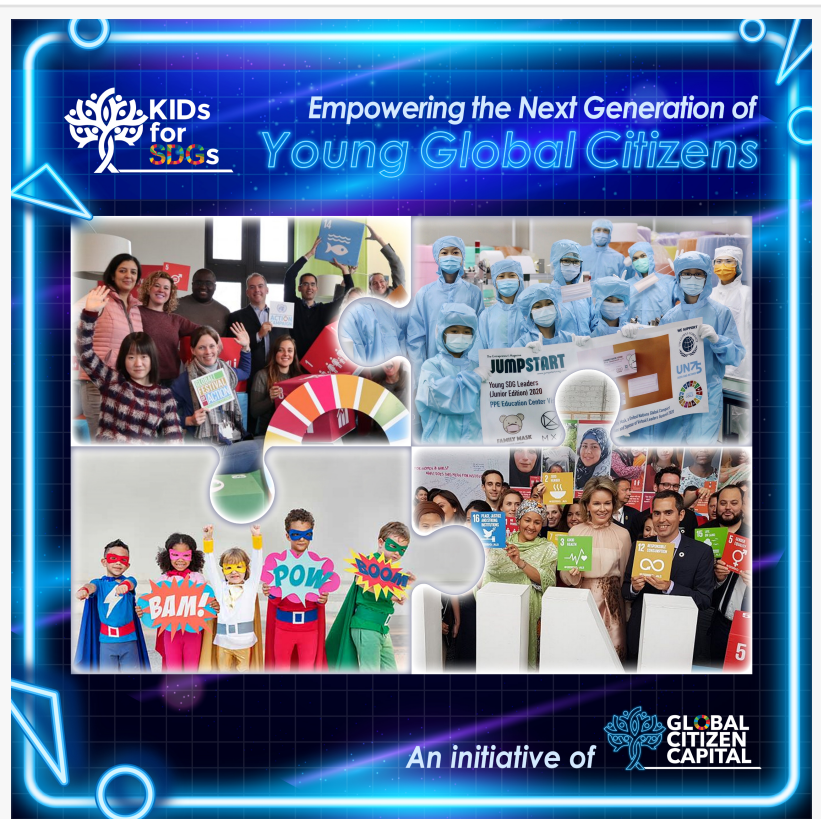


Hong Kong's Young Changemaker Incubator 2020 - a ITS, MXA and GCC Initiative

Very quickly, we realized that we had stumbled upon a program that transcends the traditional educational model. Students in university and secondary school alike were able to exercise an entirely new set of muscles through the YCI, regardless of how advanced their curricula was.

### The Educational Backdrop

Your author first came to the problem of empowering youth indirectly. My work, like the work of most, is shaped by market demands. In Hong Kong, there are myriad students vying for spots at top US universities, and this fierce competition creates an economy of consultants who help students prepare the best applications.



YCI Partner: Global Citizen Capital's KIDSforSDGs Initiative

One may often ask: how is “best” defined? For many who work with us just weeks before their application deadlines, “best” is often superficial packaging. We are all seduced by a quick fix, but in this case, it is often merely adequate rather than optimal. Sure, consultants can certainly help

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Our mission as educators is inoculating a new generation against the sort of helplessness that has afflicted previous generations, a defeatist attitude that the world's problems are too big.”

*Kenneth Kwok*

students intellectualize their work based off students' existing experiences. Rarely, however, would these empty applications be competitive against teenagers who had already set up their own research lab, ran a local charity, or set up a prosperous enterprise.

Despite all of the help we could give students, we were never given the time or mandate to help them craft experiences over which students could take ownership. This all changed this summer with the Young Changemaker Incubator (YCI).

### The Youth

Students came to the YCI often with little more than a passion to do good in this world. After a couple of brainstorm sessions, we would help them identify a concrete goal and the initial steps they would need to make an impact. Some worked with us regularly: all worked ferociously

independently. The YCI simply helps set someone off in their right direction. They end up running so fast we can hardly catch up.

Ho Sum Yee of Dean College wanted to help provide mental health care to youth in the Greater Bay Area, as she overcame her own depression and anxiety with the help of a compassionate ear. We conceived of a mental health platform, for teenagers by teenagers. She compiled a manual

to assist teenagers in giving care to their peers, drawing on common sense alongside authoritative experts and publications like the APA, the DSM V, and the Mayo Clinic.

# YOUNG CHANGEMAKER INCUBATOR

An Initiative of ITS Education Asia

Young Changemaker Incubator 2020 - Celebrating UN  
SDGs

Vitoria Carneiro Zhu, a senior at Canadian International School HK, is an aspiring architect with an unshakeable passion to rectify issues caused by inequality and poverty. After some deliberation, she decided to aim her efforts at the sub-divided flats of Hong Kong, apartments smaller than 100 sq. ft. often housing families up to four. The enterprising Ms. Zhu has built a platform - Youth for Experimental Space - for other young architects to showcase their projects. They can even be interviewed by Ms. Zhu and her partner Nikki Ivanova for the site's podcast - The Pitch.

The young men of SHUI - Mingyang Xu of Cornell, Heyuan Ni of Berkeley, and Michael Gao of Penn - are already looking past their Ivy League educations and aiming to make a positive impact on one of the world's most precious resources: water. As technologies race ahead, our ability to clean up their unintended effects lags even further behind.

Rica Wong at Hebron Academy has dealt with ADHD and Tourette syndrome as long as she can remember. After her brainstorm, she decided that she wanted to help overcome stigmas and misconceptions about these diseases. Her mission: to write children's books that could be used by parents, psychiatrists, school counselors, and bullies to help understand the types of mental and social struggles that sufferers face. Her next tasks: raising money for publication and thoughtfully disseminating copies of the book to where it's needed most.

## The Impact

These projects, among many others, have instilled a sense of empowerment in each of the students, while presenting opportunities to work with each other. After all, just like the SDGs themselves, interactive collaboration is the lifeblood of scaling impact. Hand in hand, each now believes that the problems of the world can be tackled, piece by piece, with a bit of ingenuity.

Of course, adult mentorship in programs like the YCI is important. Students enroll into courses run by WFUNA and other international organizations aiming to help students kick-start their action. Our friends at the Better Together Foundation and their [KIDsforsDGs](#) initiative have also been extremely generous helping students with their time and resources. Edvantage and its leadership in the education space is an inspiration. The YCI's roster of academic mentors paired with professional coaches is the backbone of ongoing student support. Ultimately, however, each student truly is the motor of their own initiative.

In the Young Changemaker Incubator, students of all ages, interests, and capabilities can develop their own sense of agency in this world.

Michael Li

ITS Education Asia

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